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The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

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Winnipeg's Ordeal, 1919

A Gift to the Nation

The Beaver

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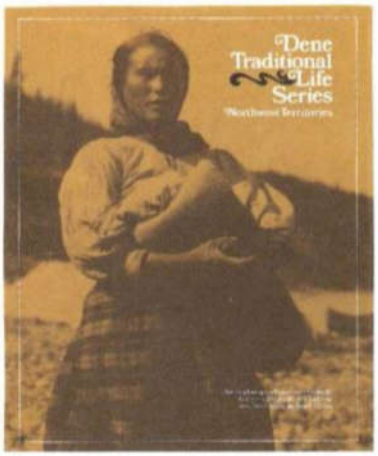

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FOUNDED 1920

June/July
1994
Vol. 74:3
Issued May 1994
$3.95

Editor:
Christopher Dafoe
Managing Editor:
Carol Preston

Advertising Information:
450 Portage Avenue,
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0E7
(204) 786-7048

Advisory Board:
Shirlee A. Smith
Michael Bliss
William Nobleman
Rolph Huband

Cover:
"On the Cariboo Road"
Water-colour
by Lucius R. O'Brien.
National Gallery of Canada.

THE BEAVER: Exploring Canada's History (ISSN 0005-7517) is published bi-monthly by The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, known as the Hudson's Bay Company, 450 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 0E7. (204) 786-7048.

U.S. MAILING ADDRESS: THE BEAVER Magazine, c/o H.A. & J.L. Wood, Inc., Box 329, Pembina, North Dakota 58271-0329.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: (6 issues) $22.50 (Canada and United States) SINGLE COPY $3.95. OTHER COUNTRIES ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION $29.

Manitoba Residents:
Add 7% PST ($1.47 on 1-year subscription: $2.55 on 2-year; $3.53 on 3-year).
Quebec Residents:
Add 8% QST to listed subscription rates.

PUBLICATIONS MAIL REGISTRATON NO. 1401.

CANADIAN POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE BEAVER Magazine, 450 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0E7.

U.S. SECOND CLASS MAIL REGISTRATION NUMBER: USPS 759-610.

U.S. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE BEAVER Magazine, c/o H.A. & J.L. Wood, Inc., Box 329, Pembina, North Dakota 58271-0329.

Second class postage paid at Winnipeg and at additional mailing office.

While every care will be taken of manuscripts and illustrations submitted, no liability will be assumed for loss.

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GST Registration Number: R 102420296

PRINTED IN CANADA

The Beaver

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A City
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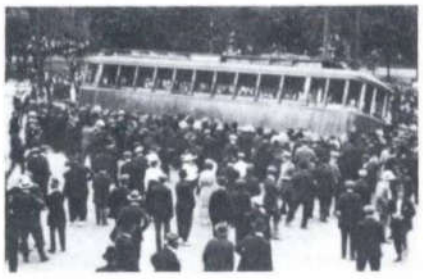


Bequest to the Nation

The real magnitude of the recent gift of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives to the Province of Manitoba and the people of Canada is not easy to grasp. The Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board has assigned a value of approximately $49 million to the huge collection, but the figure itself is arbitrary and largely meaningless. The collection is, in fact, beyond price. The gift — which consists of documents, Company records, maps, books, art works and a unique photography collection — represents the record of a large portion of this nation's history and will be of inestimable value to scholars and researchers for generations to come. Peter Bower, Manitoba's Provincial Archivist, has compared the HBC collection to the holdings of the Vatican Library and many experts claim that it is the greatest and most complete corporate archive in existence, covering a period from the late seventeenth century to the present.

Until 1974 the HBC Archives were stored at Beaver House, London, England, but the decision had been made to transfer them in that year to Winnipeg, where the Company then had its headquarters. Accordingly, 120 tons of archival material was sorted, boxed and shipped to Manitoba in the summer of 1974 and placed, on loan, in the Manitoba Archives.

Because the Hudson's Bay Company collection consists largely of documents, maps and records, it tends to lack the popular appeal of a museum display, a collection of paintings or the contents of the Egyptian Gallery at the British Museum. The HBC Archives is a rich horde of treasure to scholars and history enthusiasts, but its true value may elude many who see it only as a dry-as-dust collection of old paper, journals and ledgers.

What does the collection actually contain and what can it tell us about Canada's past? At the heart of the HBC Archives are the records of the region once known as Rupert's Land, a vast territory granted to the Company by Charles II that included much of present-day Western Canada, Northern Quebec and Ontario and parts of the Northern United States. In time the influence of the Company would extend from coast-to-coast and deep into Canada's arctic regions. The archival record runs from the first voyages of HBC vessels through Hudson Strait and beyond in the late seventeenth century, through the years of the fur trade, exploration and settlement up to the present day. There are day-by-day accounts of the fur trade, records of exploration and discovery, and detailed accounts of relations with the aboriginal inhabitants.

A researcher in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives can examine post records dating back almost 300 years or follow, in documents and letters, the search for the elusive North West Passage. The archives contain a wealth of information for genealogical researchers and students of aboriginal history.

It has been said, not entirely in jest, that the letters "HBC" stand for "Here Before Christ" and it is true that in large areas of Western and Northern Canada the Bay men were the first to make contact with the original inhabitants, the first to create maps and records and the first to exploit the commercial potential of the region. The fur traders were remarkable record-keepers and the volume of fur that passed between the Bay and London was rivalled by the tons of paper that moved back and forth in both directions. Details of the trade, descriptions of the country and its people, extensive accounts of 300 years of weather, observations on travel and exploration, letters home and letters from home, sailing logs, lists of trade goods, maps and charts — all became part of the record and all were preserved and hoarded as the centuries went by.

Bay men were prodigious map-makers and the Company Archives contain early maps of great value, from treasures such as the famous Ac ko mok ki map of 1801, drawn by a chief of the Blackfoot for trader Peter Fidler, to fine maps of the Arrowsmith family and the rough sketch maps of the HBC explorers.

Within the rows of leather-bound post journals and account books are to be found the story of early Canada, from Samuel Hearne's notes to James Isham's homely accounts and observations of life at the edge of the frozen sea and on through the long years to Sir George Simpson's waspish profiles of colleagues and employees in his famous *Character Book* ("He is full of silly boasting & Egotism, rarely deals in plain matters of fact and his integrity is very questionable. To the Fur Trade he is quite a Burden, and a heavy burden too, being a compound of folly and extravagance ..."). All these are in the HBC Archives to be examined and relished by students of Canadian history.

Here, too, are first-person accounts, such as Dr. John Rae's record of his search for the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin and reports of the great sea battle with the French in Hudson Bay in 1782 and the capture of Churchill and York Factory by the invaders.

There are letters written to London from Albany Fort in 1703 and two-and-a-half centuries of correspondence from York. And from 1719 we find the sailing instructions to James Knight for his ill-fated voyage in search of the fabled Strait of Anian, a voyage from which Knight and his men never returned, one of the vexing mysteries of arctic Canada.

Included in the detailed accounts of profit and loss, reports on expeditions and business letters are small touches of human interest that suddenly make the remote past come to life. James Isham, who was in charge at Churchill in 1741, describes how his men used axes to hack away ice six or eight inches thick on the inside walls of the habitation and how men set to work outside became so badly frozen in the hands and face "They have been obligh'd to Retire to the Surgeon to have such Cur'd or Cutt off &c".

Isham writes of heaps of mosquitoes so large that men with shovels had to clear them away. And elsewhere, in one of the old journals, is one of the "poxy creatures", squashed and preserved for all time in a speck of dried blood.

Much of the long story of Canada is here, from the writings of trader-explorer Pierre Radisson to accounts of the Northern voyages of the HBC ship *Nascopie;* the travels of Bay men from Samuel Hearne to Lorenzo Learmonth; to the coming of radio communications and air transport to Northern Canada in the 1920s and 1930s. The incredible journeys of 325 crowded years can now be made again through this vast and priceless archive that now belongs in perpetuity to the people of Canada.

— Christopher Dafoe

A Portion of Canada's History

The Hudson's Bay Company has announced the donation of its corporate Archives to the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and its Museum Collection to the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. The Company also announced it will provide funding to support both collections.

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives comprise millions of documents dating back to the founding of the Company in the late seventeenth century and have been certified by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board as having an appraised value of approximately $49 million. They include textual records such as handwritten journals, ships' logs, accounting ledgers and internal correspondence as well as maps, photographs, rare books and fine art. They constitute the largest and most reliable source of information available on early Western and Northern Canadian life.

The Hudson's Bay Company's Museum Collection comprises more than 6,000 artifacts relating, primarily, to aboriginal and fur-trade culture. The dollar value of the collection has yet to be established.

The Company said it will ensure the future care, management and interpretation of its gifts through the establishment of the Hudson's Bay History Foundation. The new Foundation will be funded through tax savings, estimated at approximately $23 million, which are expected to result from the donations.

In addition to annual operating funds, the Foundation will give the museum $2 million to house the collection, and the Manitoba Archives will receive funding for capital upgrading to house and preserve the archival material. The Foundation will also support a popular history society, now being formed.

Presenting the gifts at a ceremony in Winnipeg, Donald S. McGiverin, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, said the donations are a one-time opportunity for the Company to ensure the preservation and future use by all Canadians of the records of its historic role in Canada's development.

"These gifts follow our practice of transferring Company assets that are part of Canada's heritage to public ownership," Mr. McGiverin said. The Company's previous gifts include the Lower Fort Garry and York Factory National Historic Sites and the 1970 replica of the *Nonsuch,* the ship whose voyage from England to Hudson Bay in 1668 led to the creation of the Company in 1670.

"What makes this gift unique, however, is our decision to invest the entire tax savings from the transaction in foundations dedicated to support Canadian history and charity," he said. ◆

ANNALS OF THE FUR TRADE

'... if it can bee Soe Soone done'

The making of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives

By Deidre Simmons

The business records of the Hudson's Bay Company have been collected, preserved, and protected as evidence of the Company's legal and professional obligations to shareholders, to employees, to the British monarch, and the Government of Canada. These documents contain rare and unique information of business, scientific, historical, and political significance. In order to really understand the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, one must explore the records themselves for examples of early records-keeping and records management practices. Overcoming the problems of making and keeping records in isolated obscurity throughout much of North America, and then accumulating those records in London for over 320 years was no trivial feat.

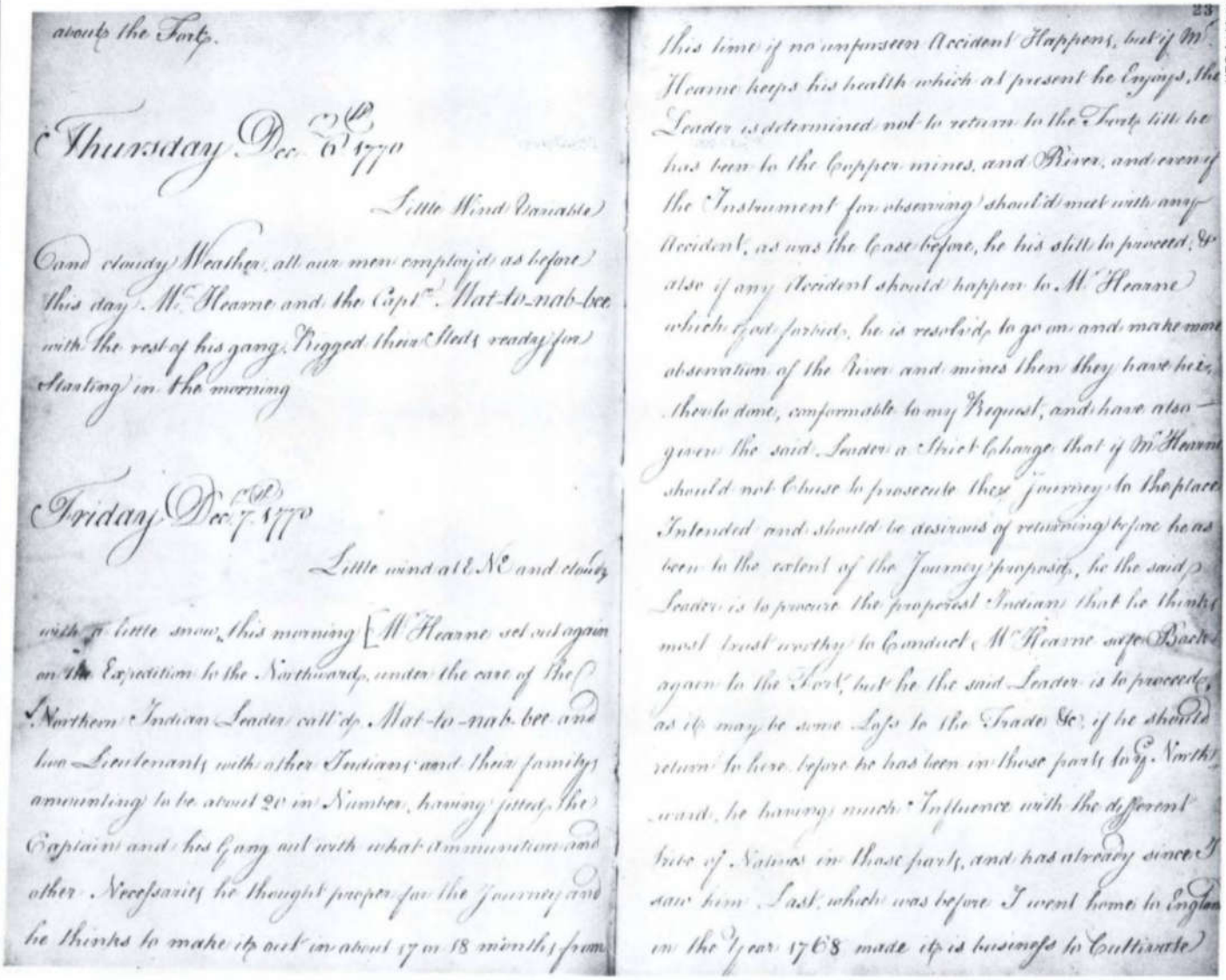
The Hudson's Bay Company came into existence on 2 May 1670 with the granting of a Royal Charter by Charles II to the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Tradeing into Hudsons Bay and theire successors." It is unlikely that any of the "adventurers" could have imagined that the charter would still be valid and the Company would be in business more than 320 years later. Details of the earliest activities of the Committee of seven plus the Governor, who were to direct the voyages and manage the business affairs of the Company, were not recorded until November 1671 when, according to the first Minute Book, the committee:

> Ordered that Mr. [Thomas] Rastel doe forthwith give an account to this Comittee not only of the whole charge of Setting out the Shippes & Stocks of the Adventurers this last voyage to Hudson's Bay, but also of the charge of all former Voyages beginneing from the first joynte Stocke of the Adventurers, & that there bee a true state of the Whole business & every particular man's interest duely sett forth & entered in fayre Vellum bookes against tuesday next the 14th day of this instante November, if it can bee Soe Soone done.

E.E. Rich suggests in volume five of the Hudson's Bay Record Society publications that there may have been books and papers, including a rough minute book, from the first four years that "were lost or carried away by one of their Servants." The minutes from 1671 "suggest that things had been informal and were now being straightened out and regularised." Rastel's work was truly the beginning of the record-keeping process. But the job was not to be "Soe Soone done" and is still being done by the archivists at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg. The "fayre Vellum bookes" stand proudly on the shelves in an air-conditioned and humidity-controlled room in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Of course, not all of the great records of the earliest years of the Company have survived. Many were destroyed and a few have strayed into other archives. The challenge of making the records and keeping the records in London and in Rupert's Land was not easy to meet. From time to time the committee in London laid down rules for keeping post account books and journals. As early as 1683, the committee directed the factors of the posts on Hudson Bay to keep "Journalls of what hath been done in the respective factories & of all occurrances that have happened to them the yeare past." These daily journals were sent to London yearly with the returning fur cargoes. As well, "Journals of discoveries etc." were kept and taken to London by the captains of vessels sailing into Hudson Bay for the Company:

> Wee also Order you to send us Coppies of all those Journals, that have been kept by your self & others, & what discoveries have been made in ye voyages to



about the Fort.

Thursday Dec. 6th 1770

Little Wind Variable

and cloudy Weather, all our men employ'd as before this day. Mr. Hearne and the Capt. Mat-to-nab-bee with the rest of his gang Rigged their Sleds ready for Starting in the morning

Friday Dec. 7th 1770

Little wind at E.N.E and cloudy with a little snow, this morning Mr Hearne set out again on the Expedition to the Northward, under the care of the Northern Indian Leader call'd Mat-to-nab-bee and two Lieutenants with other Indians and their familys amounting to be about 20 in Number, having fitted the Captain and his Gang out with what Ammunition and other Necessarys he thought proper for the Journey and he thinks to make it out in about 17 or 18 months from this time if no unforseen Accident Happens, but if Mr Hearne keeps his health which at present he Enjoys, the Leader is determined not to return to the Fort till he has been to the Copper mines, and River, and even if the Instrument for observing should'd meet with any Accident, as was the Case before, he his still to proceed, & also if any Accident should happen to Mr Hearne which God forbid, he is resolvd to go on and make more observation of the River and mines then they have hit, tho'tho done, conformable to my Request, and have also given the said Leader a Strict Charge that if Mr Hearne should not Chuse to prosecute their journey to the place Intended and should be desirous of returning before he has been to the extent of the Journey propos'd, he the said Leader is to procure the properest Indians that he thinks most trust worthy to Conduct Mr Hearne safe Back again to the Fort, but he the said Leader is to proceed, as it may be some Loss to the Trade &c; if he should return to here before he has been in those parts to'y North ward, he having much Influence with the different Nate of Natives in those parts, and has already since I saw him Last, which was before I went home to England in the Year 1768 made it's business to Cultivate

Double page from journal of "Prince of Wales Fort" kept by Moses Norton showing entries for 6 December and part of 7 December 1770: "Mr Hearne set out again on the Expedition to the Northward, under the care of the Northern Indian Leader call'd Mat-to-nab-bee ... ".

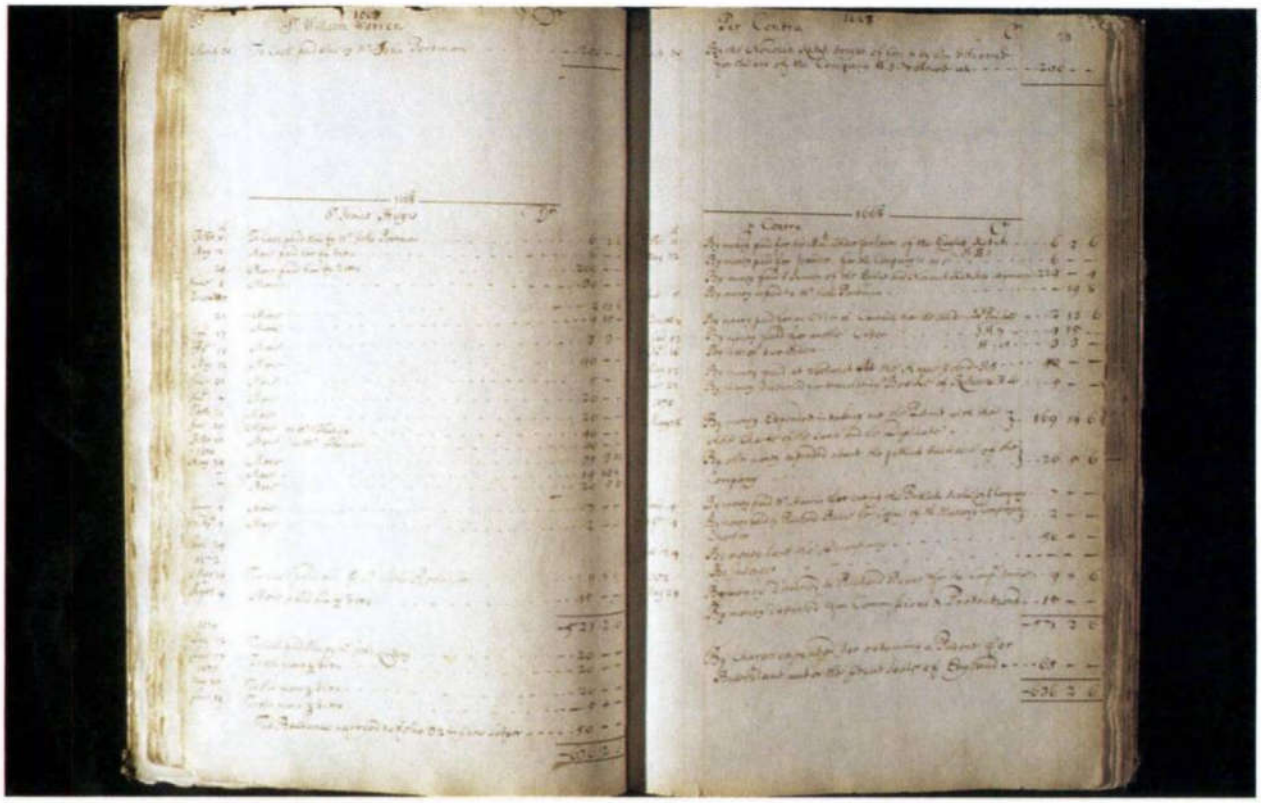
> y:e Northward, also what Number of People, & what sort you have met w:th, & what quantity of Whales have been seen, & what other sorte of fish are in those parts, likewise from whence ye flood comes, & from what point of y:e Compass, & how much ye Tides have flow'd up & downe.

In 1696, with England at war with France, Captain Henry Baley was instructed "to sett forth in warlike manner ye sd ship called the Dering ffrigtt under his own comand ... Provided alwaise that ye sd Henry Baley keepe an exact Journall of his proceedings & therein particularly take notice of all prizes which shall be taken by him."

Storage of the records which made their way back to London was initially quite haphazard but many moves and inconsistent storage conditions seem to have had little adverse effect on the condition of the records which are in the Archives today. During the first decade of the Company's history, when the committee met in London at various establishments, including the Tower, the Mint, Prince Rupert's house, and Garraway's and other coffee houses, the records moved with the committee. The Excise Office was used for meetings and as storage for papers and books in the 1670s, as was the Golden Anchor in Cornhill where the company rented a committee room. In 1680, committee member Mr. Letton was ordered:

> ... to buy an Iron bound chest with 3 Locks and Keys wherein the Pattent & Seale of the Company and such other things as shall be thought fitt by the Comitte may be lodged, of which keyes the Deputy from and for the time being shall allways have the keeping of the principall Key and the others to be disposed of as ye Committee shall think fit.

This "great trunk" was one of the earliest reposito-



HBC Archives

First Grand Ledger with entries from 1667-1675, including expenses of the "Nonsuch" voyage.

ries, if not the first, for the Company's records. They were also stored in committee member John Letton's home. In 1682 a lease was taken on Scrivener's Hall and it was "ordered that the Screetors trunck and all other things belonging to the Compa. be removed from Mr. Lettens house to Scribners hall of which Mr. Stone & the Secretary is to take care thereof."

The committee and its records had a home there for fourteen years.

Concern for the records is evident throughout the minutes with references to the "Bookes" and their protection. The security of information was noted as early as 1679:

> No Bookes or Papers belonging to the Company shall at any time be removed by any person or persons whatsoever from the Committee Roome without Order of the said Committee.

William Janes, a clerk hired at about the same time to keep the book of orders under the instruction of the Deputy Governor had to take an oath of secrecy. Rules of limited access to the records are evident throughout the history of the Company.

Writing clerks were hired to assist the factors in keeping the books at the larger posts on Hudson Bay. In fact, Thomas Gorst was employed as secretary to Governor Charles Bayly on his exploration of the coast of James Bay from 1670 to 1675. His detailed journals provided accounts of life in the first posts on the bay. The work of the clerks was critically scrutinized. Samuell Hopkins was the clerk at Albany Fort in 1721 when it was noted that his "handwriting is alter'd for ye worse ... he affecting too much flourishing & makes his letters so small some scarce to be discern'd, w'ch pray acquaint him of, & that he take care to mind his hand for ye future." It was agreed that he would be allowed to continue at the salary of 20 pounds sterling per annum but "at the same time he is to be acquainted yt The Comittee Expect he Improuve his hand to make his Letters & figuers Larger, & without flourishing." He was reprimanded again in 1722 by letter informing him that he could stay two years longer at the same wage but that his

> handwriting must improve, as letter and figures too small, and too many flourishes ... for you wrote a much Better Hand when you went over first then now, for we can Hardly Read your letters, & hope you will observe your Governers Directions in all things ... .

A further reference to Samuell Hopkins appears in

Opposite page: A page from James Isham's "Observations on Hudsons Bay", 1743.

Observations on Hudsons Bay

=of four Traps all the holes or Entrances Bailing itt=

(1) ye Beaver house (2) the thick mud made of stones, mud, & wood & (3) where the Beaver Lyes within the house, (4) when the Beaver are Disturb, or hear a noise they make into ye water, from 3 and 6: (5) where their food Lyes, (6) the hall Beaver — small Beaver Lyes (7) a Indian breaking the house open with a Pick, this to a Long stick (8) the Beaver coming out of the house hearing a noise and makes to the Vaults, (9) nutts sett in the Creek with a string and a stick at y. End to catch the Beaver as they come out of y. house, (10) a Indian sitting by a fire watching a Nett, with a stick by him to kill them as he hawls them out, (11) Rains made by the Beaver, that the water should not run to fast upon them, (12) Vaults the Beaver makes into when Disturb. out of the house, they run abt 12 or 14 foot in Land (13) and abt 2 foot under y. Ground, a foot Square & a foot Deep, (13) a Beaver knawing a tree by the teeth into the water, (14) a stopage made by Ind. with stakes to keep the Beaver from going into the River, (15) a Beaver cutting a tree down with his teeth, w. Rains over the water, (16) the stamp where cutt Down, (17) the tail of a beaver, (18) the Castor under w. Lyes through stones or 2 bladders, (19) the penis and stones (20) the Guts or Intorials, (21) the heart & Liver (22) ye Lights (23)

(10) Vaults made 14 foot in Land

the beaver lying at full Length

HBC Archives

The granting of the Hudson's Bay Company Charter by Charles II, 2 May 1670, a painting for the Hudson's Bay Company by E.A. Cox.

the next year and suggests that he was absent without leave from Albany Fort from October 1722 until he appeared before the committee in London in 1723. The committee "Resolved That he be never Imployed in ye Comp s Service for ye future." Interestingly enough the saga carries on to 1724 when an entry indicates that Samuell Hopkins was "entertained" by the Committee and "notwithstanding his former Miscarriages" was sent to York Fort for two years at 14 Pounds Sterling per annum along with a letter concerning him from Governor Macklish. He must have learned to contain his "flourishes" because there are no further references to Hopkins.

Another comment about writing style was made in 1742 to James Isham at Prince of Wales Fort:

> Notwithstanding our former directions, your General letter is not wrote in Paragraphs which you must not fail to observe for the future answering distinctly each Paragraph of our Letter.

When Captain John Newton was appointed chief factor at York East in 1748 he was given these instructions:

> You are not to Communicate any of the Companys Affairs by Letter or otherwise nor deliver any writings or Journal of your proceedings to any Person or Persons whatever, save only to those of Your Council whom you are to Consult on all occasions.

And in order to prepare himself for the job ahead he was provided with a collection of books from York Factory including a journal, account book and surgeon's indent, "for your perusal in your Voyage Outward that you may make your Self Master thereof by such time as you shall Arrive in Hudsons Bay." In 1754 directions were sent by letter that "Maps and Charts [were] to be drawn in ink and not in pencil." Accolades for work well done were also made. Minute 266 for 24 February 1808 noted:

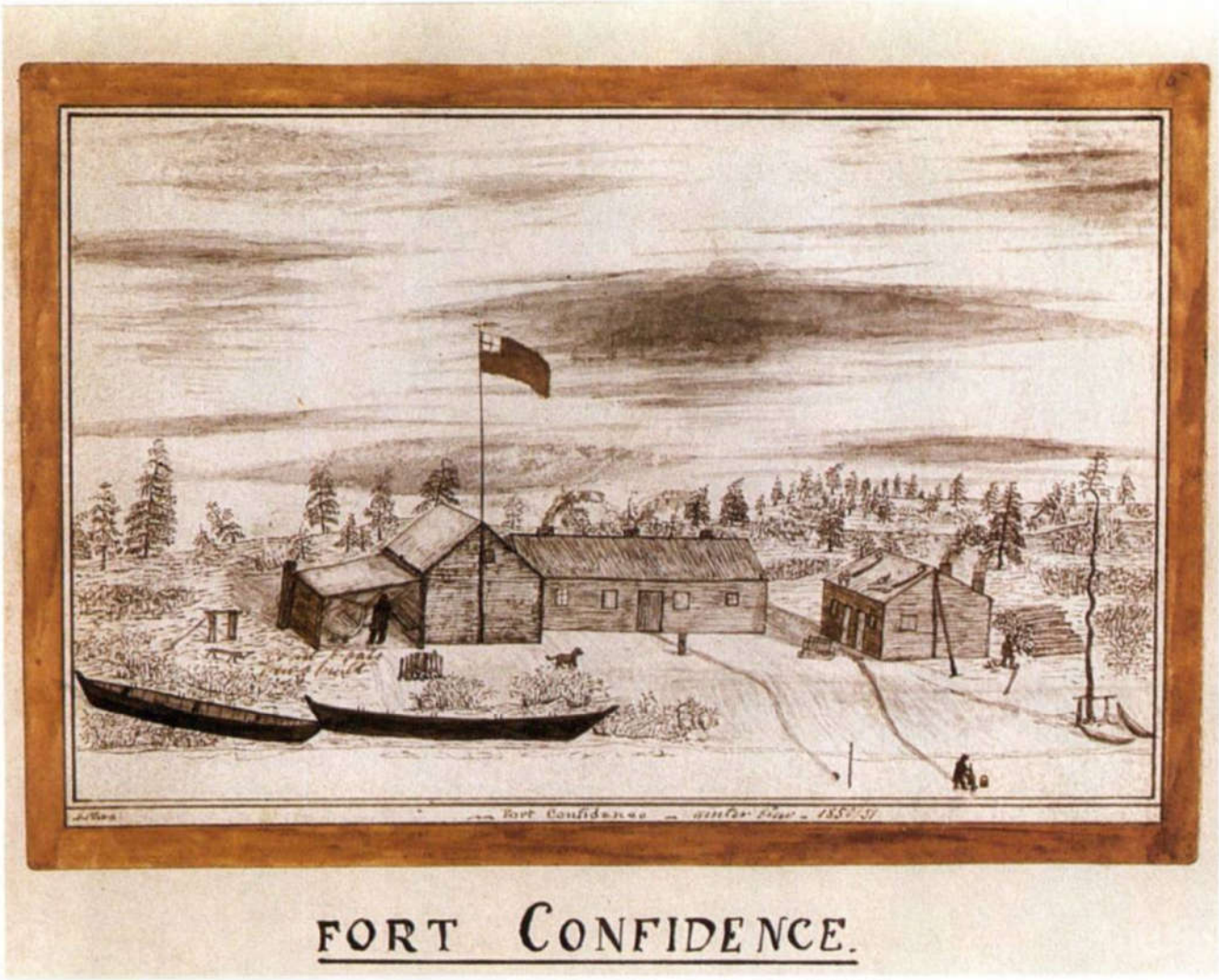
> Ordered that George Roberts Apprenticed to Captn Hanwell be presented with the sum of Ten Guineas for a neat & well drawn Chart of Hudson's Bay deposited with the Company, as an Encouragement to his steady perseverance in the Improvement of his Nautical Skill & knowledge.

In 1695/6 premises were taken on Fenchurch Street in London and "the Secretary as also the Warehouse Keeper were now ordered to take the first opportunity of Removeing the goods into the new house & to take care that nothing be imbeziled or Lost." A minute of the committee for 30 January 1741 referred to the acquisition of archives from a former servant of the Company. The Secretary was ordered to pay £2.2.0 to a Mr. Bland "for some Old Books and Odd things that were in the Possession of Mr. Ker dec'd who was his Unkle and had been in the Company's service some time Since." The Company occupied the same building on Fenchurch until 1794 when it acquired Nos. 3 and 4 Fenchurch Street which became known as Hudson's Bay House. About this time the first arrangement of the records was indicated in the committee minutes. The Secretary was ordered to:

> ... pay to W. John Brome the Sum of Twenty Guineas in consideration of the Labour & Trouble in classing and arranging the Company's Books from the Commencement of the Company & making an Inventory of & Index to the same.

The resulting inventory is probably the "Inventory of Books, &c," classified as HBCA/PAM A.64/45. It includes records dating from 1667-1796 with addenda made up to 1819 by later staff members. This inventory lists the records which form the basis of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives and includes a layout chart to their position in the bookcases at the time.

The Hudson's Bay Company offices remained at Fenchurch Street until 1865 when the warehouse was moved to No. 1 Lime Street, the former warehouse of the East India Company. Hudson's Bay House offices moved to No. 1 Lime Street the following year and the records were stored in the warehouse. They remained there until 1924 when a fur warehouse, Beaver House, was constructed in Trinity Lane at Garlick Hill and sep-



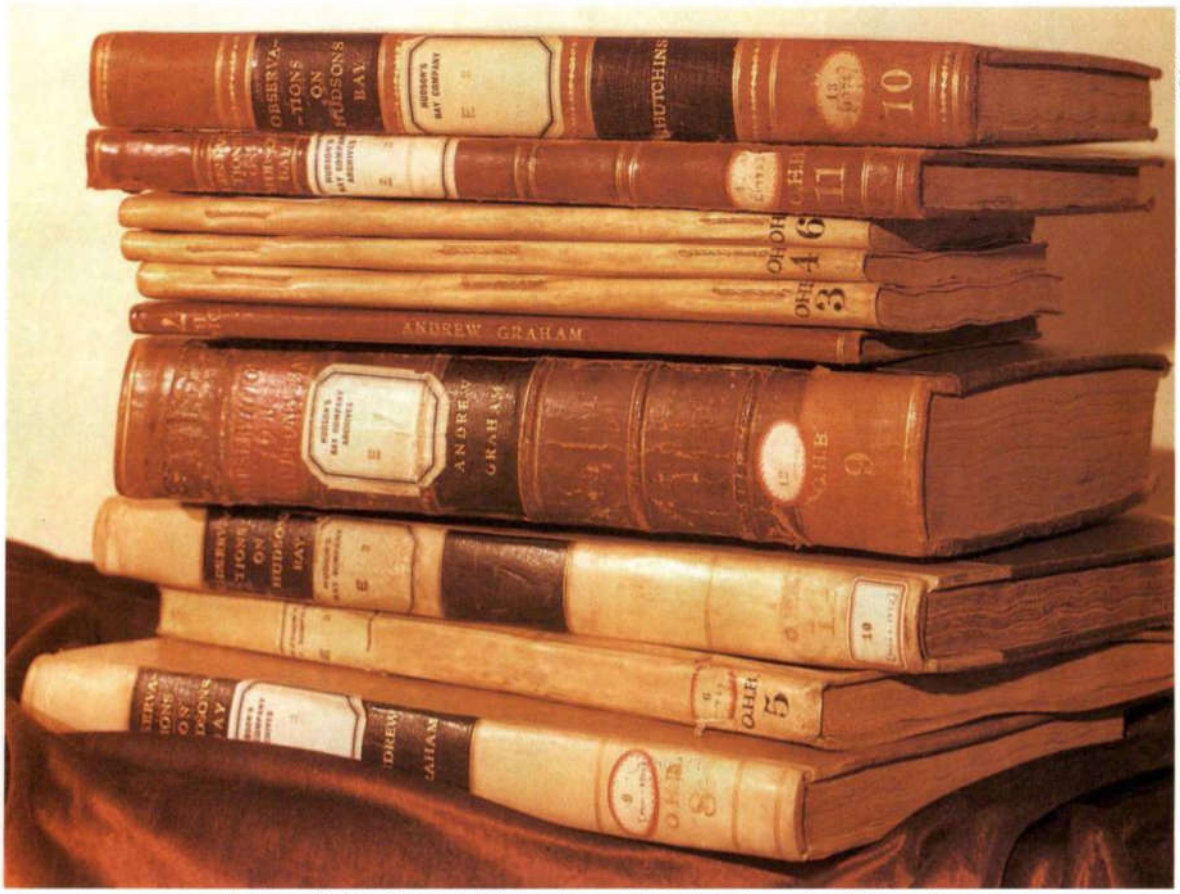
HBC Archives

Dr. John Rae's watercolour of Fort Confidence on Great Bear Lake, 1851.

arate accommodation was provided for the archives for the next three years. During this time many of the Company's records were also kept at the residence rented for historian Sir William Schooling on Elvaston Place. A new Hudson's Bay House was completed at 68 Bishopsgate in 1928 and the archives were moved to the top floor where adequate space had been designated for them. Except for six years during the Second World War when the archives were moved out of London to the Governor's home, Hexton Manor, for storage, Hudson's Bay House was their permanent home until 1955 when they were moved to Beaver House. The Company had sold the building at 68 Bishopsgate in 1948 and moved its offices to Beaver House on Queen Street, but they continued to rent space for a time in the old building and the archives were able to remain there until they could be moved to Beaver House.

The competitive nature of business in general, and particularly the competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and other fur traders during the first two hundred years of their activity in North America had required the Company to take a secretive and protective approach to their business records. The Company thus made proper records creation procedures, secure storage, and restricted access to its information high priorities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, the Company seemed to be oblivious to the historical value of many of its records. As Douglas MacKay wrote in his "unauthorized" history of the Company:

> ... if ever an historic organization was indifferent to the glamour of its past, it was this Company of Adventurers during the first two and a half centuries of its existence. The fluctuations of a business which originated in the subarctic and ended in the luxury trades of Europe were too all-absorbing to permit the cultivation of Company annals ...

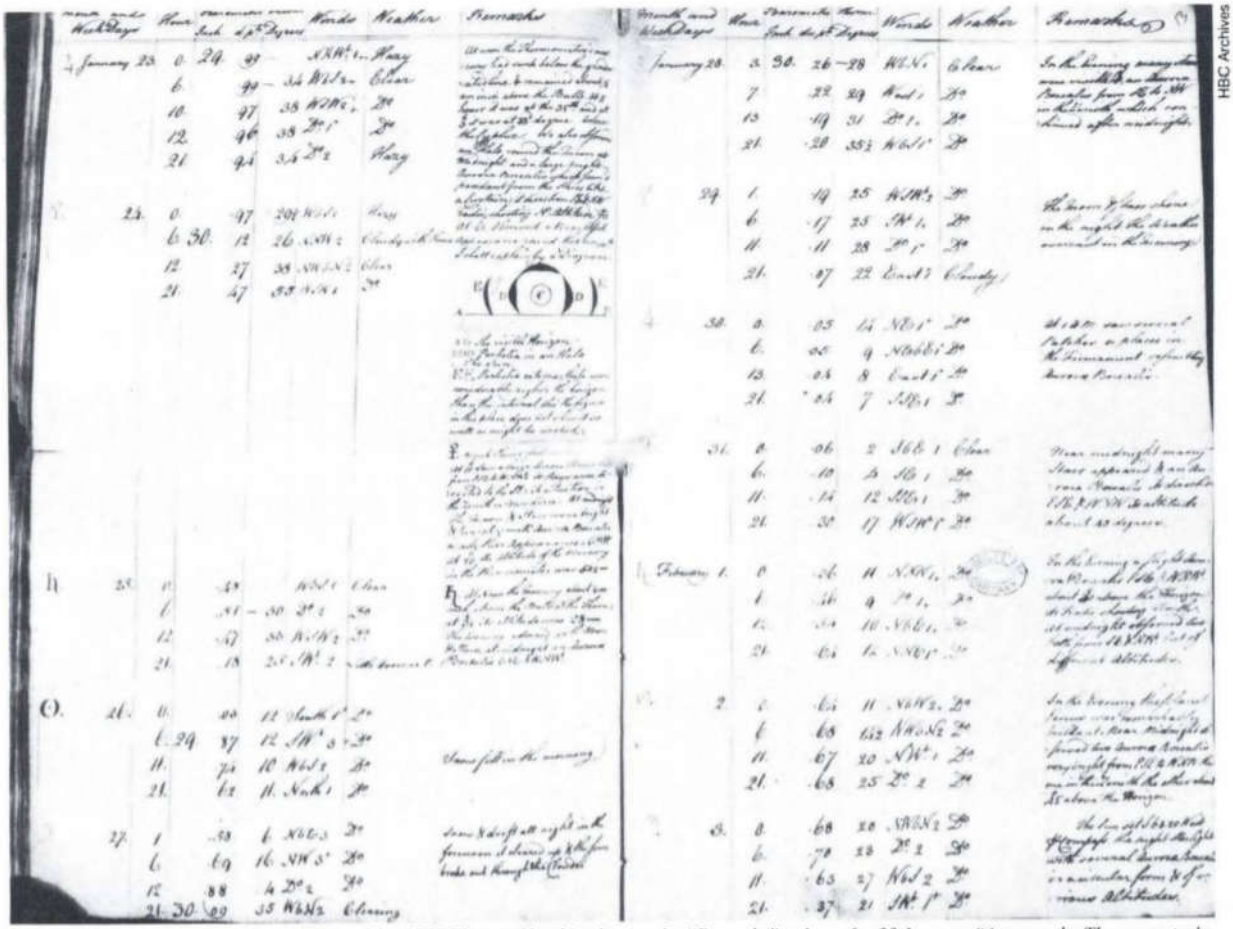


Volumes of Andrew Graham's "Observations on Hudson's Bay" and other similar works.

Books had been written about the Company as early as 1708, but few authors had the benefit of access to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. John Oldmixon's *British Empire in America* was written less than forty years after the granting of the Charter. He had in his possession original papers including Gorst's journal, some governors' papers, and other memoirs. He does not explain their provenance. He was convinced "that even by the Company's Books [not] much more is to be gather'd." In the preface to his book, Oldmixon apologised for the fact that he did not have all the information he wished to have to write his book but, without referring to the Company specifically, he blamed the negligence on those he had solicited for memoirs and who had not furnished him with them. He was perhaps the first author to encounter "the tight-lipped reserve with which the Company met inquiries, an attitude which was to become second nature to the officers and servants ..."

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, there was a growing interest in writing histories and the Company's was an intriguing topic. Robert Miller Christy completed a two-volume history of the Hudson's Bay Company, *The Last Great Monopoly,* in 1894, after consulting a lengthy list of books in the Library of the British Museum. Beckles Willson published *The Great Company* which was "compiled from the Company's archives" and other sources in 1900. Lord Strathcona, the Governor of the Company from 1889 to 1914, permitted Willson to have access to the Company's documents. In return, Willson recorded his gratitude "for assistance and courtesies rendered" to him. He also acknowledged his indebtedness to "Mr. William Ware, the courteous secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company." In his introduction to the book Strathcona calls Willson's narrative "a most interesting contribution to the history of Canada." George Bryce was also given access to the archives by Strathcona, as well as by his predecessor, G.J. Goschen and, later, by Governor Thomas Skinner. Bryce's acknowledgements explain the access he was given:

> The writer has had full means of examining documents, letters, journals, business records, heirlooms, and archives of the fur traders both in Great Britain and in Canada. He returns thanks to the custodians of many valuable originals, which he had used, to the



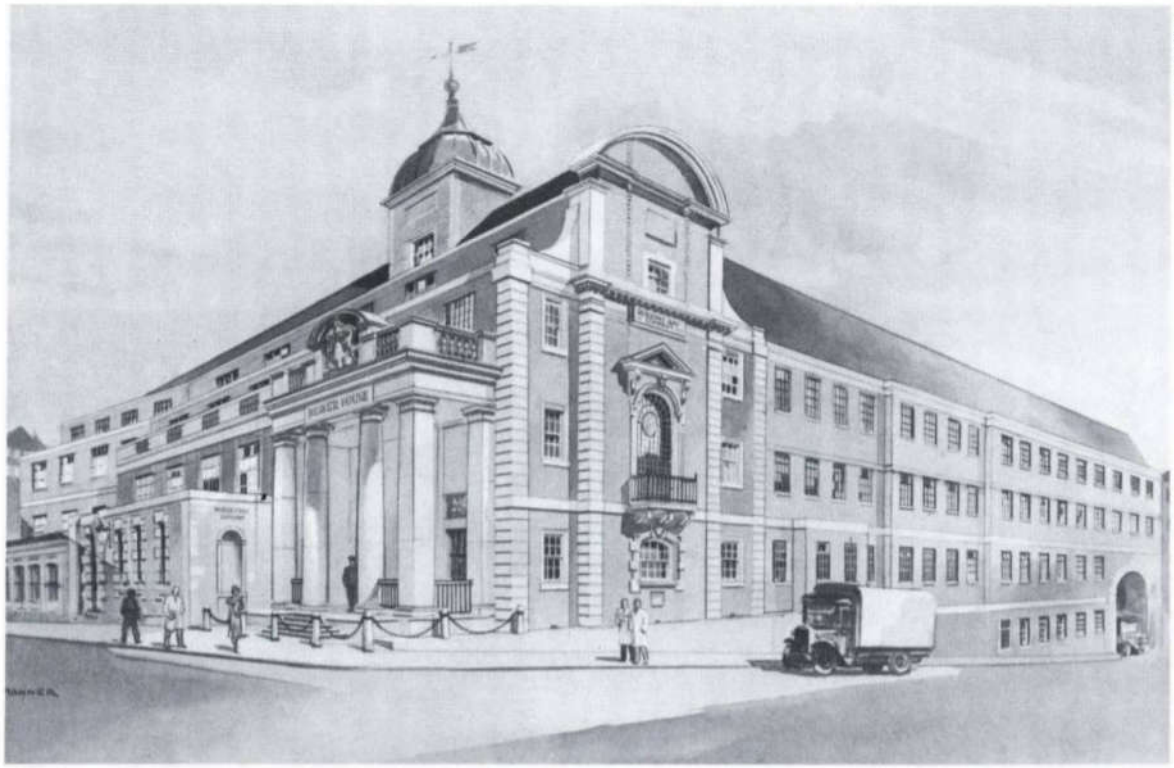
In the York Factory meteorological journal for 1772 Thomas Hutchins begins the "Remarks" column for 23 January "At noon the Thermometer's mercury had sunk below the graduated line ...." He includes a diagram of parhelia round the sun observed the next day.

Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1881, Right Hon. G.J. Goschen, who granted him the privilege of consulting all Hudson's Bay Company records up to date of 1821, and he desires to still more warmly acknowledge the permission given him by the distinguished patron of literature and education, the present Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, to read any documents of public importance in the Hudson's Bay House in London ... .

Agnes Laut, a popular historian and author of numerous historical novels, was probably the first American historian to use the archives. Her two-volume *The Conquest of the Great Northwest* was published in New York in 1907-08. She explained: "I have relied for the thread of my narrative on the documents in Hudson's Bay House, London; the Minute Books, the Stock Books, the Memorial Books, the Daily Journals kept by chief factors at every post and sent to London from 1670. These documents are in tons. They are not open to the public. They are unclassified ... Besides the documents of Hudson's Bay House, London, there is a great mass of unpublished, unexploited material bearing on the Company in the Public Records Office, London."

Laut also acknowledged her Hudson's Bay Company contacts, Lord Strathcona and William Ware. The Governor of the Company provided access to the records based on his perception of the merits of individual applications. Access seems to have been granted to well-known authors who might be expected to write favourable popular histories of the Company which stressed the "romance" of the fur trade in a far-flung wilderness rather than controversial details of Company business practices.

A dilemma regarding the archives began to emerge for the Hudson's Bay Company in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Company had accumulated a large body of historial business records which were beginning to stimulate research interest.



HBC Archives

Beaver House, London, 1920. The HBC Archives were kept here before transfer to Winnipeg in 1974.

The Company's willingness to grant access to some of these records to certain historical researchers and, indeed, to endorse their findings in the prefaces of their books suggests that the HBC had begun to realize that it could benefit from favourable publicity generated by such histories. The Company responded on occasion to this interest in its history by requesting its officers to identify and protect historical records. However, it did not do so consistently. Furthermore, some researchers were denied access to the existing Company records. And the Company did not provide a formal archival service or office which would be responsible for administering custody of and access to its older records. The absence of a consistent records retention and access policy as well as a formal archival service to assist researchers suggests that the Company was wary about liberal access to its records at the same time as it wanted the advantage of favourable treatment of its past.

Some of this dilemma was resolved in 1920 when the organizers of the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the Company's founding finally acknowledged the old records as significant historical documents and set the stage for the organisation of an official archives. A book, *The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay during Two Hundred and Fifty Years 1670-1920,* was published by the Company as a souvenir brochure of the anniversary and the writer hired to produce it, Sir William Schooling, stayed on as Company historian until 1926. Although he never wrote the definitive history of the HBC as expected, Schooling made the Company aware of the extent and importance of its historical records, the inadequate arrangements for their administration in the Company, and the growing international academic pressure to obtain better access to them. Efforts had been made at various times to accumulate all of its records in London, but Schooling was the first outsider to have free access to those records. The move towards intellectual and material arrangement of the records begun by Schooling led to the establishment of the Company Archives Department in the early 1930s.

Businesses have traditionally been regarded by scholars as secretive and often unduly restrictive about access to records. The Hudson's Bay Company was no exception. But it eventually overcame a cautious, highly controlled access policy to accept its archival duty of preservation and reasonable public access for which it has been justly praised. ◆

Deidre Simmons is an archivist with the University of Victoria. She was archival consultant at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, during 1991-1992.

THE HBC MUSEUM COLLECTION

'mere curiosities are not required ...'

By Robert Coutts and Katherine Pettipas

While the Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company, a world-renowned collection of corporate documents dating to the late seventeenth century and located in Winnipeg since 1974, is familiar to thousands of researchers, less is known about the Company's extensive museological collections. The assembling of the Hudson's Bay Company's Museum Collection after 1920 provides a fascinating glimpse into the history of cultural properties in Canada and the efforts of individuals and institutions to protect and interpret the history of Canada's aboriginals as well as over three centuries of daily life in the service of "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson Bay".

The practice of collecting natural history specimens, artifacts, and artworks relating to the exploratory activities conducted by the Company was well established by the nineteenth century. The London Board of the Hudson's Bay Company had for years contributed scientific specimens to the Royal Scottish Museum and the Smithsonian Institution in the United States. In addition, the Company had also gathered together materials for exhibition at its headquarters at Beaver House in London.

Many of the Company's fur trade employees also acquired their own private collections. Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Northern Department from 1821 to 1826, and thereafter Governor of the trading territories in British North America until 1860, collected various natural and human history materials for his personal enjoyment. He also presented selected items to his friends and business acquaintances. Simpson was a patron of several frontier artists, including Paul Kane to whom he provided free passage, board, and lodging with the Company's fur brigades in exchange for orders of specific artwork subjects and "curiosities of the country" that reflected the natural history and the lives of the various aboriginal peoples. Many of these collections, including Simpson's, found their way to the auction block. Some remained in private hands, while still others have been sold or donated to museums.

By the turn of the twentieth century, several retired officers of the Hudson's Bay Company fur trade had expressed an interest in the development of an historical corporate collection. According to available documentation, the idea for the acquisition of a Hudson's Bay Company historical collection and the establishment of a museum was first proposed by Edmund Taylor in the early 1900s. At that time, Taylor was in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company saleshop business in Winnipeg. In a memorandum sent to headquarters in 1918, Taylor made the following proposal:

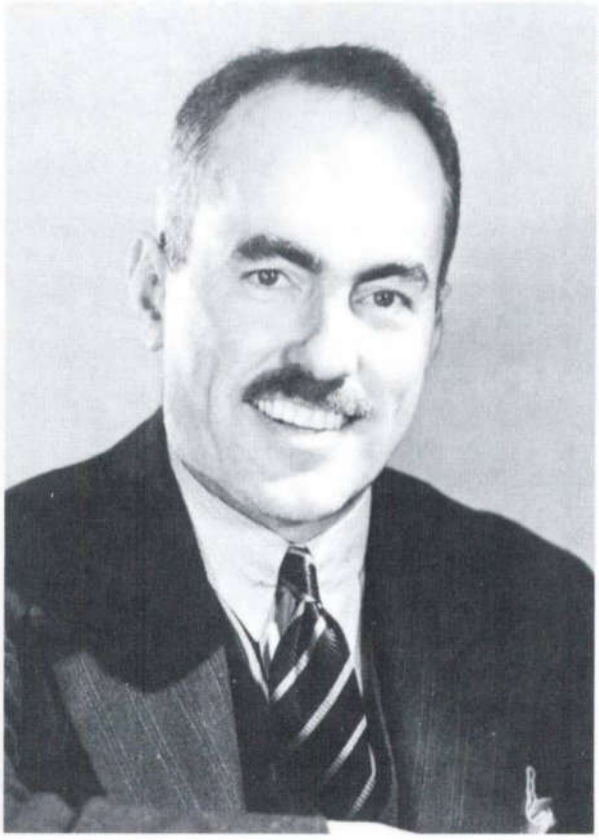
> I suggested that steps should be taken by the Hudson's Bay Company, before it was too late, to collect and preserve for the public interest and benefit, historical records of every nature as well as all kinds of obsolete articles of trade and use, country-made articles, ordnance, native work and devices, implements ... It was also suggested that to the above should be added as soon as possible a complete collection of flora and fauna of the Canadian North and North-West.

The acquisition and public display of historical material relating to the history of the Company's activities and the history of the people in Western Canada was considered to be a "duty" that the Company owed to itself and to all Canadians. There was also a more practical side to having a major historical exhibit in a retail setting which Taylor described as "an enormous and direct advantage" to the Company's business.

Taylor devoted six pages of his memorandum to detailing the types of materials which he felt could be obtained from private holdings, in particular, from retired officers and other employees of the fur trade. Included in his list of proposed acquisitions were the following: a copy of the Company's original charter,

HBC Archives

Above: Entrance to the historical exhibit formerly housed in the Company's Portage Avenue store in Winnipeg. Below: Clifford Wilson, curator of the collection between 1939 and 1957. Wilson also served as editor of "The Beaver".



HBC Archives

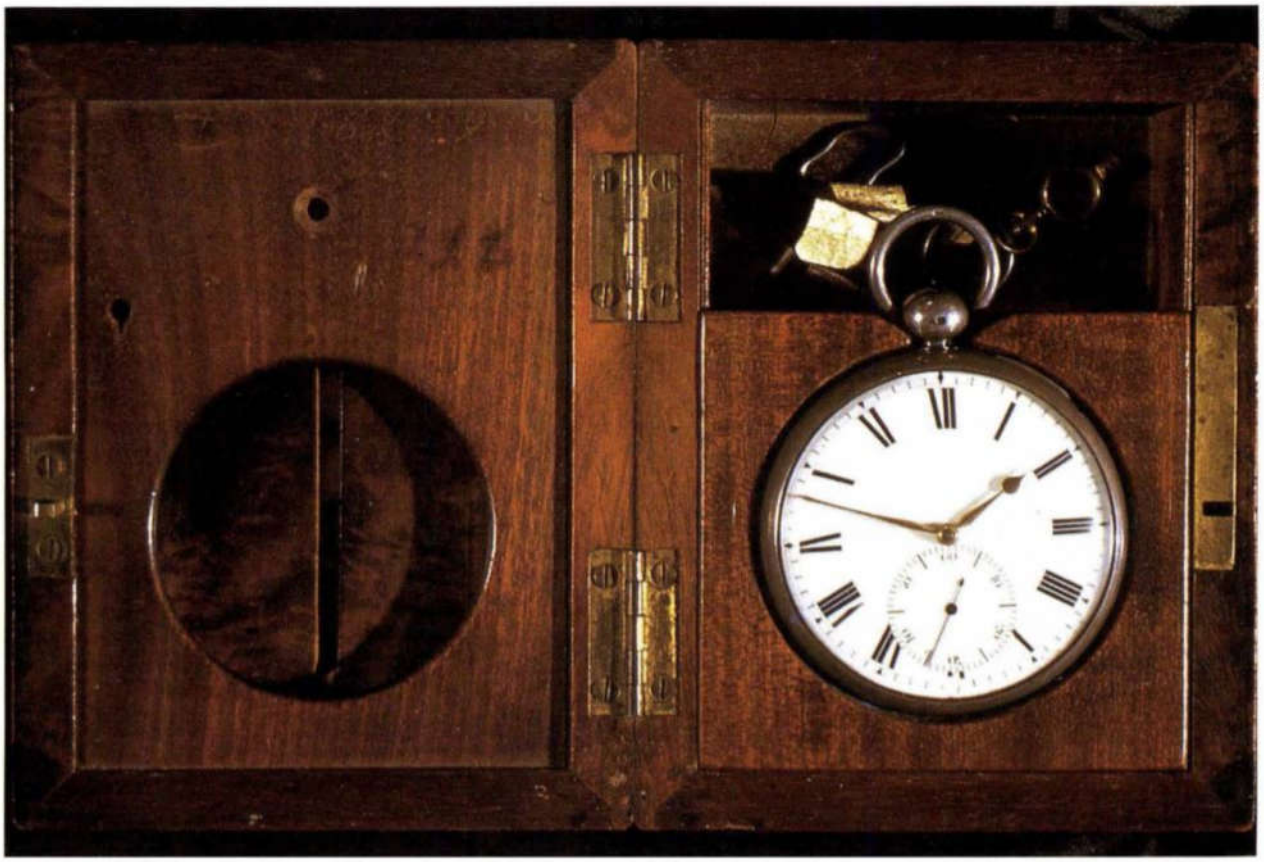
post journals, correspondence, maps, artworks, photographs, commemorative medals, examples of official clothing once distributed to aboriginal leaders, firearms, transportation gear and implements, tools used by the Company's employees in the areas of hunting, fishing, trapping and everyday life, as well as items associated with every aspect of Indian and Inuit life. He also proposed the collection of natural history specimens. Taylor recommended that the care of these collections be placed in the hands of one of the retired officers who "has been and seen" and who possessed "the necessary qualifications of education and charm of manner combined with an almost inborn love of the things of the past ..."

The official response to Taylor's memorandum was a positive one, with a cautionary note regarding the costs associated with the purchase, maintenance and permanent establishment of the collection, as well as the need to employ a qualified curator. Winnipeg was proposed as "the most appropriate" site for the collection "both in respect of its historical association with the Company and its central position in Canada."

Two events provided the impetus for a decision to establish a corporate collection: the approach of the Company's 250th anniversary in 1920, and the news that the HBC in London had sold "as junk" several rooms full of old records of historical interest to a New York firm that was buying materials for sale to European and American museums. Shortly thereafter the London Committee authorized its Canadian counterpart to arrange for the purchase of any "relics of interest", and instructed post managers not to dispose of anything without prior consent.

Therefore, one of the initiatives undertaken by the Company in celebration of its 250th anniversary in 1920 was the collection of "historical relics, lore and souvenirs of the early history of the Company." Arrangements were made with Francis David Wilson, a district manager of James Bay before his retirement, to travel to the major posts to purchase materials. In addition to early Inuit artifacts, he collected trade tokens, journals, documents, and other items associated with the fur trade.

Another founding collection was purchased by the Company from Dr. W.E. Anderson, an eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. This large collection contained aboriginal items from the Canadian arctic, subarctic, and prairie regions collected between 1897 and 1901. A third collection, belonging to T.J. Fleetham, a former Indian Agent, was also purchased. This collection of plains and Athapaskan-related materials had been on display in the Calgary store. Other smaller collections were also obtained including those owned by C.H. French (a former District Manager for the Hudson's Bay



HBC Archives

Relics of the Sir John Franklin expeditions are housed in the Company collection, including this chronometer watch from the 1825-26 expedition. Below: Dyed porcupine quill-work of Red River origin, collected by William Kempt, a surveyor for the Company (1822-23) and interim Governor of the Red River Settlement in 1823.

HBC Archives

Company Fur Trade Department in British Columbia); materials acquired by the Reverend Canon Edward Matheson of Battleford, purchased from a Winnipeg dealer; and items that were either acquired or produced for the anniversary historical pageant staged at Lower Fort Garry. At the same time, materials were being solicited from employees working in the North and from the Company's headquarters in London which had accumulated a collection of its own over the years.

In 1922 a major exhibition of materials acquired to date by the Company was installed in its Winnipeg store on Main Street. In 1925 the exhibition was moved to the third floor of the Company's new retail store on Portage Avenue. Harlan I. Smith of the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa assisted with the general plan of the exhibit and the identification and labeling of artifacts. The objective of the exhibition was "to depict by means of relics, pictures, documents, models, etcetera, the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, life in the fur trade, the story of pioneer settlers and the customs, dress, and industries of the aboriginal tribes." The exhibition was divided into the following themes: early history, furs, Indians, life in the service, forts, posts and stores, fights and wars, and settlement.

The Company's initial attempt to amass a corporate collection was seen as only a beginning. By 1925, the Company had taken stock of its holdings and had reassessed its collection method and mandate. As was stated at the time of the relocation of the exhibition to the Portage Avenue store, "essential articles are lacking; in almost every division only part of the articles available are displayed because of the extreme limitation of space ..." Accordingly, a general appeal was made to friends both within and without the service for objects

HBC Archives

A travelling cassette and domestic articles from the collection belonging to Chief Factor George Simpson McTavish, nineteenth century.

to fill in the gaps, especially in the areas of the early history of the Company and life in the service. The mandate was reflected in the public appeal for materials — "mere curiosities are not required, only those things which have real meaning in connection with the life of the Company's officers, clerks, and servants, also of the pioneer settlers and the natives."

The educational value of these collections was also an important consideration. In addition to preserving a public record of the Company's contribution to the development of Canada for posterity, the collections and their exhibition were considered to be the Company's legacy to the world. The Winnipeg exhibition was intended for a broad audience, as was explained in the exhibition catalogue. It was

> especially [for] newcomers and children who wish to learn something of the life and work of the country's pioneers and of the Indians who originally inhabited this great land. For the "old-timers," the exhibit would bring back memories of early struggles — for the Indians, the exhibit will serve to keep available examples of native handicraft — the product of a skill that is now almost a memory of the days of their forefathers.

By the mid-1930s, the Company had contracted Clifford Wilson to catalogue the collections and he was subsequently hired as the first Director of the Museum in 1939. He was also Editor of *The Beaver* magazine from 1939 to 1957. An historian with experience in the reorganization of the Château de Ramezay in Montreal, Wilson took on the challenge of curating the collections and reinterpreting the Company's exhibitions over the years. His training in the field of museology was largely gleaned from hands-on experience, museology studies in the United States in the late 1930s, visits to other institutions, and frequent correspondence with Canadian and American colleagues. Before Wilson left the Company almost two decades later to accept an

appointment as the Director of Western Canadiana for the Glenbow Foundation in Calgary, he had also served as the President of the Canadian Museums Association. In the early 1960s he went on to become an Assistant Director at the National Museum in Ottawa.

During his term as Director of the Company's museum collections, Wilson undertook the tasks of sorting, re-organizing and documenting the collections. In 1935, the Company had decided to centralize its collections, and over 600 items were shipped to Winnipeg from its Vancouver and Victoria stores. In addition, the collections continued to grow both through purchases and donations. The items collected during Wilson's curatorship reflect a refinement of the Company's original collections mandate. An emphasis was placed on artifacts originating from Western Canada, particularly in the area of aboriginal collections. He further rationalized the collections of Indian and Inuit materials by collecting those items that demonstrated the historical use of trade goods. As a result, the archaeological materials in the collection are not extensive.

In the area of exhibition development, Wilson struggled with the need to educate the public in an enlightening and entertaining manner. He wanted the Company's museum to become a "living museum" and not "... an enlarged version of a private curio cabinet." His firm belief that a museum was not simply a building for storing "ancient objects" but rather "one dedicated to learning" is reflected in the diorama approach that he introduced for the exhibit of artifacts. Influenced by some of the approaches to exhibitions in Chicago and Milwaukee, Wilson supervised the construction of a number of "living tableaux". These dioramas included a replica of a northern trading store with fully stocked shelves of trade goods; a diorama presenting the winter mail packet arriving by dogteam at Fort Garry from York Fort via Norway House; a California brigade setting out from Vancouver for Yerba Buena; and a model of a fort. Throughout his curatorship, school programs were held in the museum and many articles were loaned for exhibition in Canada as well for historical exhibition tours in other areas of the world.

When Clifford Wilson left the museum in 1957 for a position at the Glenbow, Barbara Johnstone, his assistant since 1953, was hired as the new curator. In late 1959 the Company inaugurated a number of changes in the management of its Winnipeg operation and it was decided to close the museum in its Portage Avenue store. The next year the displays were packed up and stored in a sub-basement of the building while Johnstone was moved to a small office behind one of the store departments. As curator Johnstone continued to receive items for the collection from various individuals and groups.

In 1960 Company representatives began negotiations with officials from the Manitoba Department of Industry and Commerce regarding the future of the collection. According to J.R. Murray, the Company's Managing Director at the time, these discussions arose because of the need to close the museum at the store and "our deep concern with the proper disposal of the collection." The Company stated its wish to see the collection remain intact, preferably under the control of the provincial government. The Minister of Industry and Commerce, Gurney Evans, proposed to the Company that the collection be used at Lower Fort Garry as part of the planned joint federal and provincial development of the fort as a major historic site and tourist attraction. (Later, the Province of Manitoba declined involvement in the Lower Fort Garry project and subsequent restoration and development work at the site was carried out entirely by the National Historic Sites Division). The Company expressed its approval with this arrangement, subject to the condition that it retain a handful of items from the collection for its own use and that from time to time it be allowed to borrow pieces for use in special events. On 10 August 1960 Premier Duff Roblin wrote to Murray that Manitoba was "pleased to accept the historical collection now in your Winnipeg store museum on a permanent loan basis."

Before any artifacts could be moved to Lower Fort Garry, however, custodial care of the collection had to be legally transferred from the province to the federal government. The Company's assent to such a transfer was given in September of 1961. A standing loan agreement, subject to two years' notice for withdrawal or cancellation by either level of government, was subsequently signed in April of 1962 by Gurney Evans on behalf of the province and Walter Dinsdale, the federal minister responsible for the National Historic Sites Division (NHSD). The loan agreement with the federal government specified that a number of conditions be met by each of the signatories. These included provisions regarding insurance, the construction of a museum to house and display the collection, the appointment of a curator, and the establishment of regulations governing the loan of items from the collection to other institutions and historic sites.

Prior to the signing of the agreement, the NHSD had proposed that the collection be housed at the fort's warehouse building, a stone structure dating from the late 1830s. It was soon determined, however, that refitting this historic structure for display and storage purposes would be too costly. Next, it was recommended that the collection be permanently located on the second floor of the Saleshop/Furloft building, another 1830s stone building at the fort, but this suggestion was rejected by Jack Herbert of the NHSD who argued instead that a "proper museum" be constructed to house and display the collection.

HBC Archives

The replica of the Company "trading store" set up in the historical exhibit in the Winnipeg store until the 1960s.

In 1963 work began on the construction of the museum at Lower Fort Garry. A modern steel and concrete structure was given an exterior facade that replicated the old retail store built by the Company on the same spot in 1875 and torn down by them in 1923.

The collection was moved to the fort in November of 1964, transported to the site from the basement of the Company's downtown store and from a Company warehouse. The transfer actually occurred prior to the completion of the new museum, and the material was temporarily stored in the Saleshop/Furloft. On 3 June 1966 the Lower Fort Garry Museum, containing displays of selected artifacts from the collection, was officially opened to the public.

At the time of its opening the museum was considered one of the most up-to-date facilities of its kind in Canada and contained approximately 1,200 square feet of storage space, a cold storage room and two floors of display area. (Later the top floor of the building was converted to office space.)

Since 1966 considerable work has been carried out by curatorial staff at the fort in upgrading the collection records and creating hundreds of research files. According to a report by curatorial staff at Lower Fort Garry, the collection artifacts were organized by type and a computerized system was established to improve inventory and research access. Original Company record books were verified, donor files for approximately 90% of the original artifacts were created, and almost the whole of the collection was numbered and partially catalogued. The bulk of the collection has been photographed, in colour, while extensive research files were set up on many of the individual artifacts and groups of artifacts. Several research papers were written using

materials from the collection. Curatorial staff were also responsible for administering long and short term loans from the collection. These have included loans to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Glenbow Museum, as well as loans to other Parks Canada historic sites for use as prototypes for replication.

The collection and its documentation has been a priceless source of information for many qualified researchers over the past thirty years. Research materials and photographs have been used in a variety of ethnographic exhibits, museological publications and as illustrative materials for articles in such magazines as *The Beaver* and *National Geographic.* Artifacts from the collection are also used in the interpretive programme at Lower Fort Garry as part of the furnishings in the site's restored buildings, in displays in the Visitor Reception Centre, and in exhibits on the first floor of the Museum building. An agreement has been reached between Lower Fort Garry and the Hudson's Bay Company to continue the use of artifacts from the collection in the historic buildings at the Lower Fort. While curatorial staff at the fort have been responsible for custodial care of the HBC Collection, they have also been charged with maintaining the separate Lower Fort Garry site collection, some 20,000 artifacts.

By the time of its relocation to Lower Fort Garry in the early 1960s, the Hudson's Bay Company museum collections had grown. Euro-Canadian artifacts, artworks, trade goods, post libraries, journals, correspondence, and documents as well as Indian and Inuit artifacts found their way into the Company's holdings through donation, purchase, and even trade. In 1972 the Hudson's Bay Company was redecorating the entrance to Beaver Hall in London and at that time decided to ship its collections to Winnipeg. Over 300 items were sent to Canada and housed at Lower Fort Garry. By the 1990s, the collections numbered over 6,000 artifacts that represented the Company's history in the areas of defence, the fur trade, exploration, navigation, communication, and the retail business. Over half of the collections represent items that were produced by Indian, Metis and Inuit peoples with whom the Company conducted its business. In addition, there are a number of artifacts associated with the early Euro-Canadian settlement period.

While the collection contains objects of historical and ethnographic rarity, many similar examples can be found in other museums. What makes this particular collection so interesting is its documented associations with the Company's activities, its variety of materials, and the stellar examples of certain classes of objects. Some significant materials include excellent examples of early nineteenth-century Indian quillwork and ribbonwork from the Red River area; a quillworked and painted Metis-style frock coat; a walking stick, a travel bureau, and a collapsible boat that belonged to Governor George Simpson; a chronometer, relics, and a sword associated with the Arctic expeditions of Sir John Franklin; a cigar box featuring the Company's crest that belonged to Sir Winston Churchill; an antique map and gun collection; nineteenth-century drawings by the Swiss artist Peter Rindisbacher; the James Houston collection of Baffin Island prints (1958); and argillite carvings produced by the West Coast Haida carver Charlie Edenshaw. Numerous artifacts associated with the Canadian subarctic, such as the Captain Frederick Mayhew collection from the Mackenzie River area and the smaller collections originating from various officers of the Company, with other exciting research possibilities through cross-referencing with archival documents and photographs.

In 1994 the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature will become the new home for the Hudson's Bay Company's Museum Collection. It will be housed in a new wing and will be made as accessible as possible for public viewing and research. The addition will consist of a storage area, research facilities, and a major gallery for permanent and temporary exhibitions, and will be completed by 1997.

In early 1995 a major exhibition featuring the history of the Hudson's Bay Company Museum Collection and its contents will be mounted. The collection is an addition to the Museum's Native Ethnology, Archaeology, and History collections. Many of the items will complement its present holdings. In addition to the museum's largest artifact, the reproduction of the *Nonsuch,* related collections of particular note are represented by archaeological materials from Upper Fort Garry and other posts; the ethnographic collections of Paul Kane, C.C. Chipman, Leif Sunde, and Donald MacTavish, as well as a number of historical collections associated with the history of the fur trade in Manitoba. The Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature will co-operate with the Manitoba Archives to ensure cross-referencing between the museum and archival collections and participation in joint activities such as public presentations, exhibitions and training programs. The museum will also be working with Lower Fort Garry in its exhibition refurbishment program, and with the aboriginal community in the areas of expanding its museum training and public program activities. ◆

Robert Coutts is an historian with the Canadian Parks Service. Katherine Pettipas is Curator of Native Ethnology at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg.

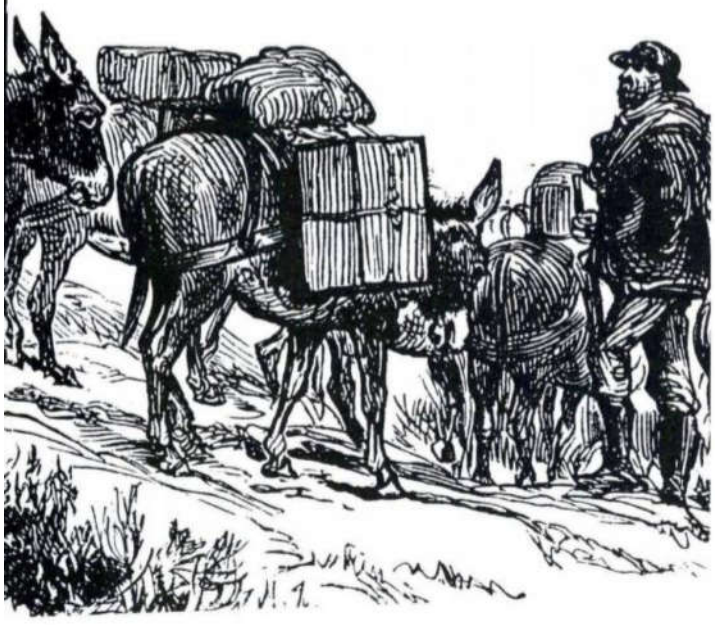
On the Cariboo Gold Rush Road

By Robert H. Busch

Gold — probably no other mineral has lured so many men to seek their fortunes far from home in the rugged corners of the world. Never was this more true than in the Cariboo gold rush. And never was there a feat more impressive than the building of the wagon road north to the Cariboo's valleys of gold.

It is not known who first discovered gold in British Columbia, but by 1858, the Hudson's Bay Company had received enough gold from Indians and other traders to warrant sending it to the closest mint, which lay far to the south in San Francisco. The steamship *Otter* departed for that port in February of 1858, and upon its arrival word of the new northern gold fields spread quickly. The Cariboo gold rush had begun.

The time could not have been more opportune for California's own gold rush was in its dying days. One San Francisco reporter at the time wrote that "steamer after steamer sailed from our port ... black with the crowds who were rushing to the newly discovered land of gold." Official steamship records show the increasing interest in the steam route to the north. In April of 1858, 455 people travelled by steamer from San Francisco to Fort Victoria. In May, the number of eager travellers had swelled to 1,262. And in the month of June, 7,149 joined the rush north. By July, it is estimated that some 25,000 people had surged north by steamer, with some 8,000 others trekking north by land. This represented an amazing influx of people; at the time, the total population of British Columbia was only 7,000 persons. The bulk of the miners were American, but England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Italy, Spain, and Australia all sent their share of wild-eyed adventurers.



Most of the fortune-seekers docked at Fort Victoria, crossed to the Mainland and boated up the Fraser River to the fur post of Fort Yale. In March of 1858 the first major gold strike on the Fraser was made at Hill's Bar, which was to become the richest and longest-worked of the many gravel bars on the Fraser. Other bars soon began to yield their riches, and their names echo the origins of their finders: Ohio Bar, Puget Sound Bar, New York Bar, Wellington Bar, China Bar, Texas Bar, and Dutchman's Bar.

Miners pressed upriver, attempting to trace the gold back to its source, the elusive mother lode. But nature had a surprise for them in the treacherous canyon of the Fraser River. Near-vertical walls over 300 metres high soared above the raging Fraser, making travel by foot almost impossible. Along the narrow ledges and sandy banks snaked narrow Indian trails held together with a few wooden poles and a lot of hope. Judge Matthew Baillie Begbie travelled along these trails in April of 1859, pronouncing them "Utterly impassable for any animal but a man, a goat, or a dog."

Those who attempted to travel up river by water faced major rapids, whirlpools, and swift water. Hudson's Bay Company Governor George Simpson wrote: "I should consider the passage ... to be certain Death, in nine attempts out of Ten. I shall no longer talk of it as a navigable stream." Another early adventurer wrote that "About one-fourth of the canoes that attempt to come up are lost in the rapids."

At the time, the major land route north followed the old fur trails north-east to Fort Kamloops, but few of the gold-seekers wished to miss out on the rich gravels of the Fraser. Clinging to ledges and battling rapids, they made their way north.

The land itself proved to be only one of the many obstacles these hardy men had to face. The Indians living along the Fraser resented the sudden invasion of their hunting and fishing territory, and there were numerous attacks on the intruders. Ned Stout, an early miner who later gained fame in the Barkerville gold discoveries, recalled that as a result of these skirmishes, bodies of would-be miners were frequently found floating in the Fraser: ten were pulled out at Yale, "at Deadman's Bend on the opposite shore they took out nineteen; and the Hudson's Bay Company at Hope took out thirty-two."

Those who survived the treacherous canyon and its inhabitants emerged only to be faced with hundreds of miles of muddy trails. Lieutenant Palmer, a Royal Engineer, reported that "It is difficult to find language to express in adequate terms the utter vileness of the trails of (the) Cariboo, dreaded alike by all classes of travellers; slippery precipitous ascents and descents,

The town of Yale, British Columbia, from "The Illustrated London News", 12 May 1865.

fallen logs, overhanging branches, roots, rocks, swamps, turbid pools and miles of deep mud."

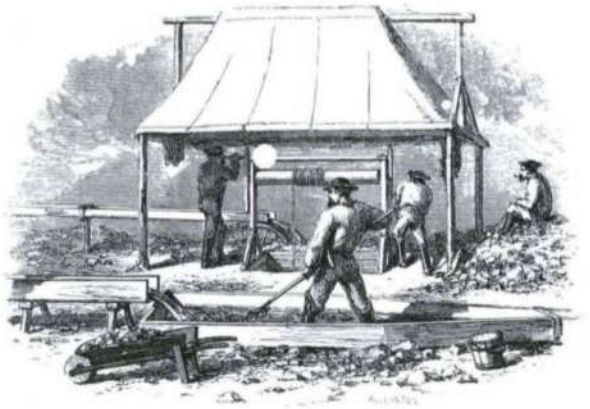
The trails proved to be too much for many of the adventurers; of the 30,000 men who had reached the Fraser, it is estimated that some 25,000 gave up and returned home.

Those who trudged on pushed gamely through miles of mud, carrying heavy packs on their backs. Some travelled on horseback, some by mule. Many lost faith and turned back, passing their fellow miners along the way. One miner wrote: "the numbers of these poor, broken-down fellows ... were enough to dishearten us altogether." Some of them starved en route, their dreams ending quietly at the side of the trail.

Many of the gold-seekers had seriously underestimated the arduous journey ahead of them, and had brought insufficient food. One miner's diary records a typical meal: "Shot 1 rook and 1 hawk for dinner. Quite a treat, being on short fare. 1 lb. rice between 5 men for breakfast."

The heavy winter snowfalls were the last straw for many of the adventurers. One wrote: "the snow was four and a half feet deep. We had no snowshoes and the walking was most labourious. We ... arrived having taken ten days to make 57 miles."

By 1859, small bands of hardy men had pushed north and had found gold at Quesnel and Horsefly River. In 1860; gold was discovered at Keithley Creek, which flowed into Cariboo Lake. From there, miners trekked north over mountain passes along steep ravines. The route was a difficult one for both man and animal, but the lure of gold was strong. Increasingly rich finds were made in the many creeks that crossed the wild country, and in 1861, gold was discovered in Williams Creek.



MINERS WASHING FOR GOLD.

Engraved by W. J. Linton for *The North West Passage by Land*, 1865.

This was to become the richest creek of all, and around its banks grew the gold rush town of Barkerville, the final destination of the hordes trudging north from Fort Yale.

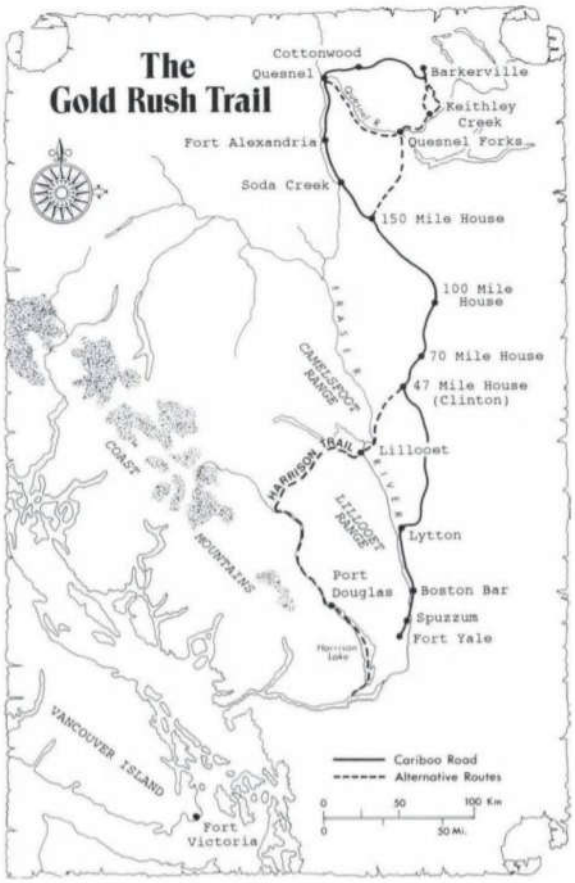
Those lucky few who had found gold wrote enthusiastically of their good fortune. "I am well," wrote one, "and doing well — making from two to three thousand dollars a day! Times good — grub high — whiskey bad — money plenty." As the average wage at the time was only $2 per day, it can be imagined what effect such a letter would have on its recipient. Soon, the trickle of men arriving in Barkerville became a flood.

It was clear that the trails north were inadequate for the volume of traffic they bore, and early on in the rush plans were laid for a more substantial road.

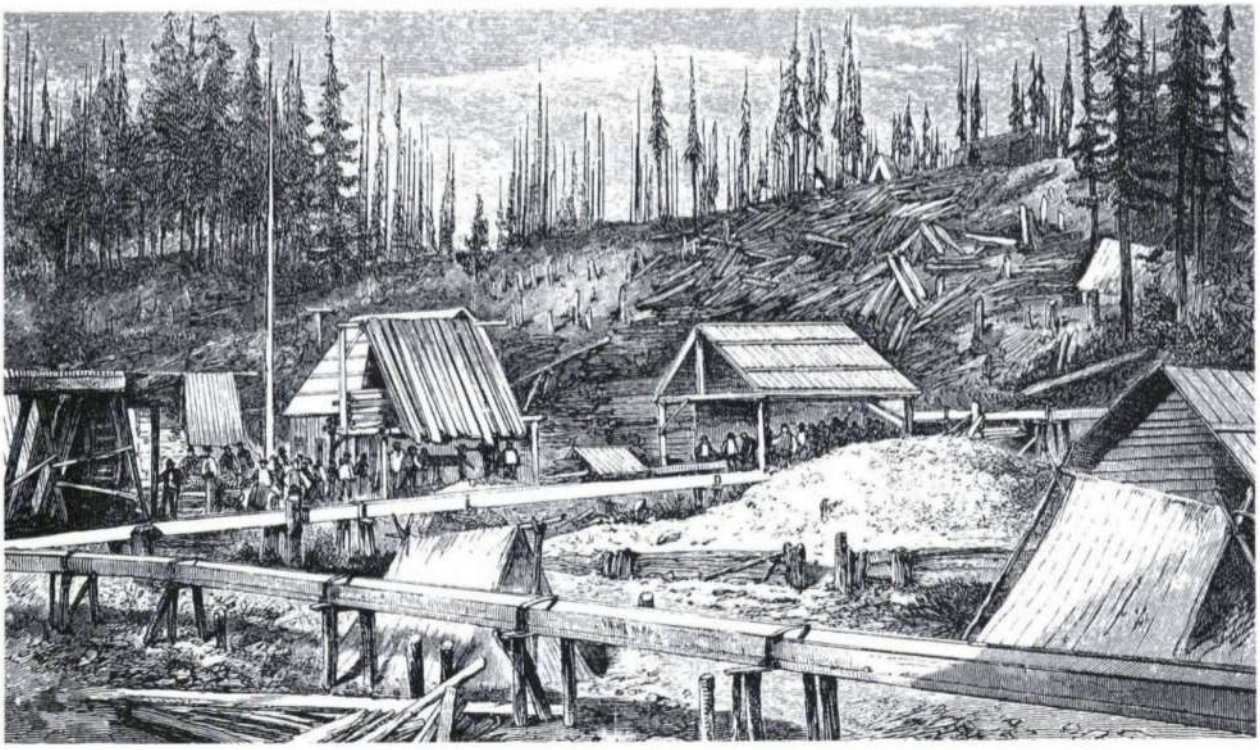
As early as 1846, a trail by-passing the Fraser Canyon had been established through Harrison Lake and following a string of lakes north to Lillooet. It was this Harrison Trail that received the first preference from the government when the thousands of miners first arrived.

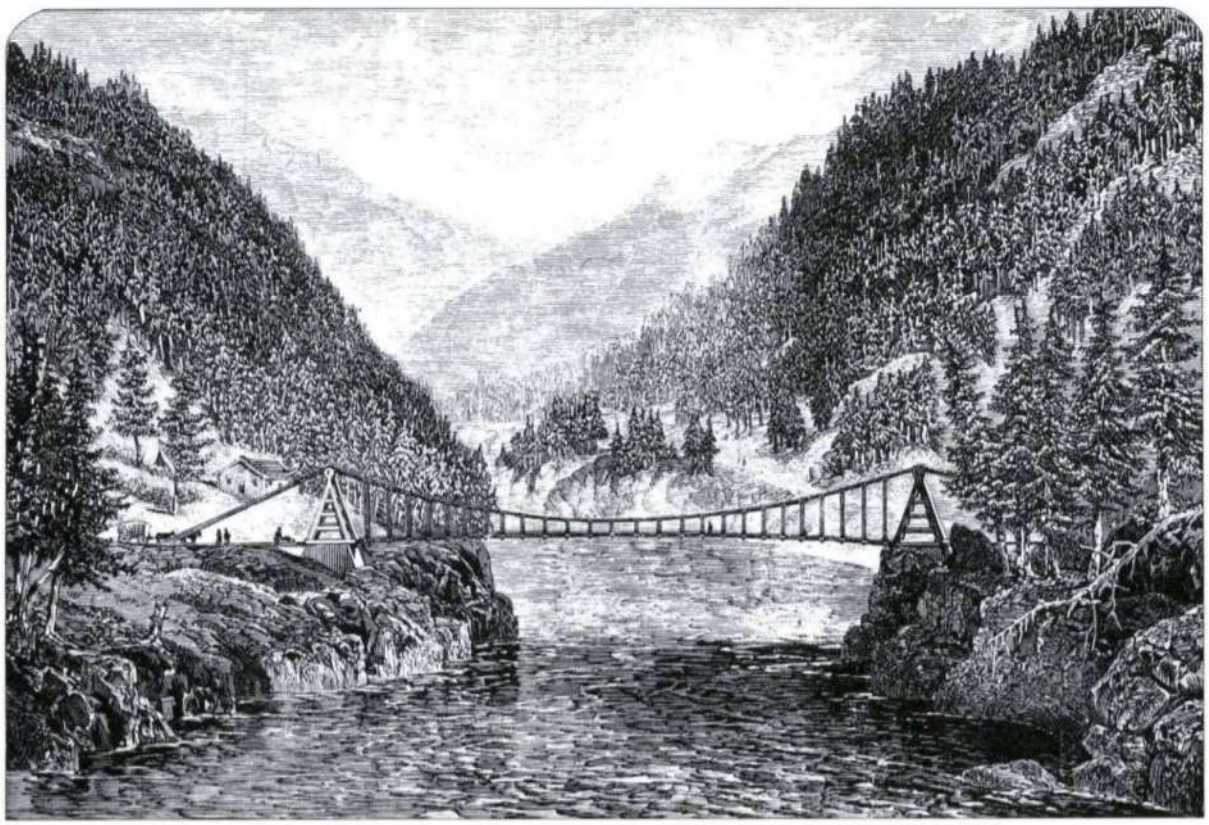
In August of 1858, work began on upgrading the Harrison Trail and was completed by the end of the following month.

The route at first proved to be popular, and soon further improvements were necessary. In May of 1859, engineers began to widen the trail, making it a proper wagon road five metres wide. This construction was finished by November of 1861, and by the following

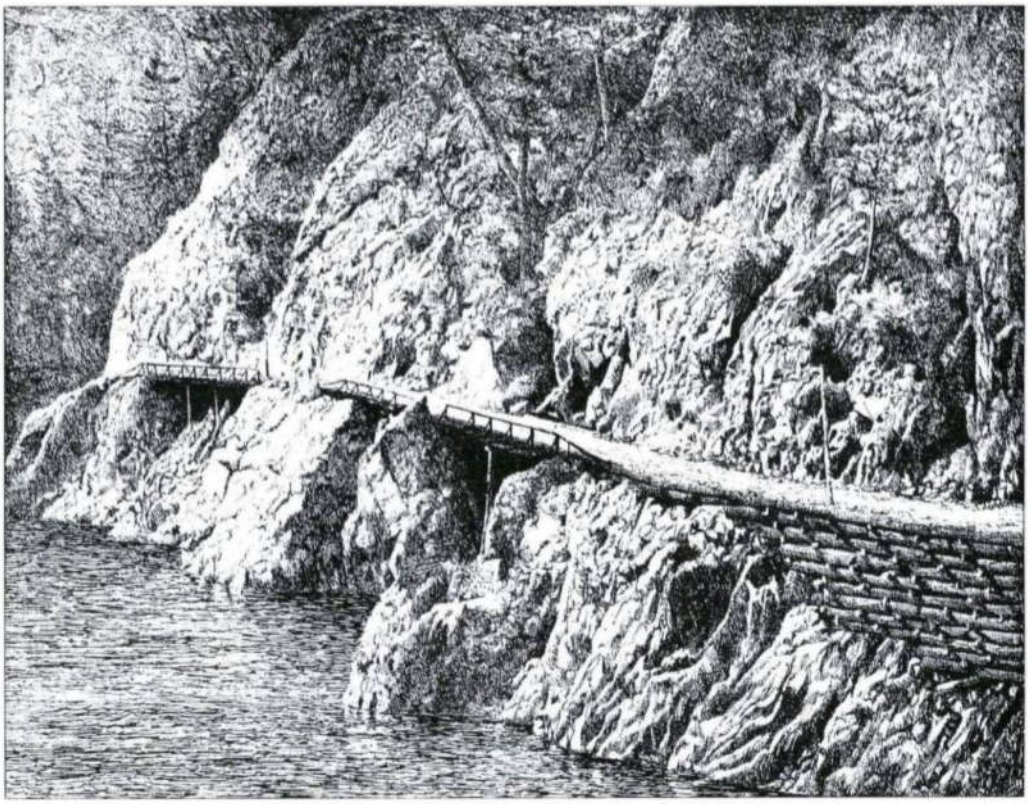


The Cameron Claim, Williams Creek. From "The North-West Passage by Land" 1865.





Wire suspension bridge over the Fraser River. From "The Illustrated London News, 12 May 1865.



"17 Mile Post" on the Cariboo Road, Fraser River, British Columbia.
From "Canadian Illustrated News", 9 March 1872.

spring the Harrison Trail was in full operation. It was described by one proud engineer as "a wagon road which would be no discredit to many parts of England."

At the north end of Harrison Lake, a small port, Port Douglas, sprang up. It never amounted to much, and no trace of it can be seen today. One disgruntled visitor in 1863 described it as "a vile hole in [a] hollow".

Past Port Douglas, steamboats travelled the three main lakes on the Harrison Trail: the *Marzella* on Lillooet Lake, the *Lady of the Lake* on Anderson Lake, and the *Champion* on Seton Lake.

But the many gold-rich gravel bars between Fort Yale and Hope proved to be a strong attraction, and many miners still pressed for an adequate trail along the Fraser. The miners themselves were able to build a narrow trail from Fort Yale north to Spuzzum, but the steep cliffs beyond prevented further progress.

The Governor of the Crown Colony of British Columbia, James Douglas, proved to be a man of great foresight and vision. He listened to the miners' demands, and saw that a road north along the Fraser would do much to open up the great interior of the colony.

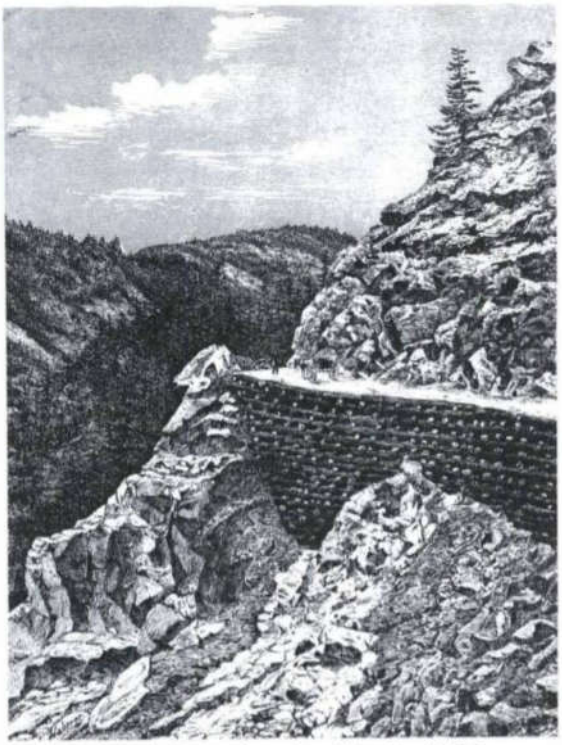
After due deliberation, he announced that a wagon road north would be undertaken by Royal Engineers brought in from England and by private contractors. In May of 1862 construction began. Government engineers were paid from government coffers, and private contractors were paid cash, later to be supplemented with toll receipts from bridges. The stretch from Fort Yale to Lytton was completed by the fall of 1862.

Many Indian and Chinese labourers were used, but the smallpox epidemic of 1862 greatly reduced the number of available Indians. The Chinese, many of whom had participated in the California gold rush of 1849, were looked upon as second-class citizens, and were paid accordingly. One contractor recorded paying his white labourers $60 per month, while the Chinese workers received only $45.

The road was often blasted out of sheer cliffs, and gaps were filled with cribbings of huge logs and rocks. One traveller wrote in his diary that there was "no fence whatsoever and certain death to fall over the precipices into the river."

The wagon road followed the west side of the Fraser for a short distance, but the steep terrain north of Chapman's Bar made a crossing to the east bank essential. The bridge that was constructed, in 1863, was tested by a four-horse team pulling a load of 2,700 kilograms. It passed the test, and was the first suspension bridge in Western Canada.

As a proper road was pushed north, roadhouses sprang up as stopping places for travellers. They were spaced roughly 20 kilometres apart, approximately the distance that one could travel in a day. The roadhouses



The Cariboo Road clings to the rocks at China Bar Bluff. From "Canadian Illustrated News", 29 June 1872.

varied widely in their degree of comfort and quality of service. One traveller recorded in his diary his impressions of one northern roadhouse: "wretched place, no fire, no beds". Others were a good degree more comfortable and served good meals. Some maintained large vegetable gardens, and others set up stores to serve their customers. Describing the Beaver Lake roadhouse, a miner named J.C. Bryant wrote: "At the head of the table was a large roast of beef and scattered over the table were dishes containing all kinds of vegetables ... This hotel was the best between Victoria and the Cariboo." Those who could not afford the roadhouses camped outside, and in the winter dug beds into the snowbanks.

Small settlements often sprang up around the larger roadhouses, and were described in terms of the distance they lay from Lillooet. The practice originated from the habit of one contractor, Gus Wright, of placing a wooden post to mark the completion of each additional mile of road. Thus, 100 Mile House and 150 Mile House gained their names, proud relics of the pre-metric era.

All types of traffic were seen on the wagon road, ranging from bull, mule and oxen teams to man-powered push carts. The zealous miners pushed their animals hard, and it was a common sight to see dead horses and mules on the road.

In May of 1862 one enterprising group of businessmen imported camels, hoping that their famed hardiness would earn the men a fortune. Unfortunately, the venture quickly proved to be a resounding failure. The strong smell of the animals stampeded horses and mules, and an attempt at deodorizing the camels with scented water did not prove to be successful. The camels' soft feet also proved to be no match for the rocky wagon road, and the unfortunate animals were soon sold or set free.

By 1863, the Cariboo wagon road had reached as far north as Soda Creek, just north of present-day Williams Lake. Sternwheelers took passengers from there to Quesnel. These vessels were strongly built and could travel across very shallow stretches of water. Often, they were heavily over-loaded, and boiler explosions were common. One of the earliest travellers to journey by sternwheeler noted in his diary: "some 40 other passengers embarked; very crowded; no room to sit comfortably". The fare from Soda Creek to Quesnel was $7 per person. The duration of the trip varied, depending on weather and water conditions. Heavy fog along the river often resulted in hours of delay.

1863 was literally the golden year of the Cariboo gold rush. There were over 3,000 registered claims along Williams Creek, and the entire area officially produced $3.9 million in gold that year. The same amount of gold today would bring $79 million, an amazing sum for a single year of production.

In 1864, F.J. Barnard started a stagecoach service between Fort Yale and Soda Creek. Widely known as the "BX" (for Barnard's Express), this service continued in varied forms until 1915. The original fare from Fort Yale to Soda Creek was $130 and the trip took two and a half days. In the winter, sleighs replaced the coaches, and heated rocks were used to keep the passengers' feet from freezing.

As the freight service north to the Cariboo improved, the exorbitant costs that had prevailed in the gold camps plummeted. Freight rates dropped from $1 per pound in 1861 to 15¢ per pound three years later. Flour that cost $2 a pound in Barkerville in 1862 dropped to 35¢ per pound by 1864. The improved road also spelled the end of the Harrison Trail, and it gradually fell into disuse.

The improved road also meant that fresh meat and vegetables could finally be shipped to the gold fields. In the summer, vast herds of cattle were driven north, and housewives along the route scurried to close doors and windows to the mile-long clouds of dust.

Although most of the early trails to the gold fields struck east from 150 Mile House to Keithley Creek and then north over the mountains to Barkerville, this route was deemed too steep for a wagon road. Indeed, one 1861 miner wrote that "they had started from Antler Creek with a train of thirty animals but every one had fallen in the precipitous ravines." The engineers wisely decided to avoid this difficult terrain. They instead chose a route north from Soda Creek to Quesnel, east to Cottonwood, and then on to Barkerville.

The road from Soda Creek to Cottonwood was completed by 1864, but the high foothills east to Barkerville deterred many contractors from even bidding on the stretch. One traveller described the trail east of Cottonwood as "awful ... nothing but stumps, roots, and mud up to the ankles."

In April of 1865, construction began on the final portion of the wagon road, but the rocky highlands and poor weather conditions made work very difficult. The contractor for this portion of the road, Malcolm Munro of Fort Victoria, pleaded with the government for an extension, which was summarily refused. Other contractors had to finish the work for him, and Munro ended up in bankruptcy.

By the time the road was finished in 1865, over a million dollars had been spent, a huge sum in the 1860s. Governor Douglas' dream had been realized, and the rich interior of the province was accessible at last.

The road had almost come too late; within another five years, the Cariboo gold rush was over. The rich claims gradually played out, and the miners drifted off to chase new dreams. Many travelled north in 1868 to take part in the Omineca gold rush. Today, a paved highway follows approximately the same route as the old Cariboo wagon road. New bridges span the Fraser Canyon, and the trip north to Barkerville can be achieved in a matter of hours.

Of the thousands of men who had rushed to the Cariboo, few struck it rich, and even fewer kept their fortunes. Billy Barker, the lucky miner after whom Barkerville was named, died in poverty in Victoria in 1894, and was originally buried in an unmarked pauper's grave. "Dutch" Bill Dietz, the man who had first found gold in Williams Creek, died penniless in 1877. "Cariboo" Cameron, one of the most successful of the early miners, died a poor and broken man in a Barkerville hotel room in 1888. ◆

Robert H. Busch is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in a number of national magazines. He lives near Likely, British Columbia, in the heart of the Cariboo gold country.

1919

The Winnipeg General Strike Reconsidered

By J.M. Bumsted

The war to end all wars had finally ended on 11 November 1918, but its legacy would remain for years. Even as the Canadian prime minister attended the peace conference at Versailles in the spring of 1919, he and his government became increasingly concerned that the revolution which had begun in Russia more than a year before the Armistice would spread to North America. For both Canada and the United States, fears of a Bolshevik-inspired uprising led to increased efforts to control radicals at home, and abroad to military intervention in Russia to support the revolution's opponents. At the same time, the Canadian government demobilized hundreds of thousands of soldiers as quickly as it could transport them home, literally dumping them back into the city and countryside whence they had come with very little concern for the implications of such a policy. Government planning for the adjustment from a wartime society and economy to a peacetime one in 1918-19 was, to say the least, limited.

With both inflation and unemployment running rampant in the wake of the war, with "reds" suspected everywhere, the Canadian people faced yet another uncontrollable legacy of war in the month after the Armistice: a particularly virulent virus (commonly known as Spanish influenza or "the flu") brought back from Europe by the demobilized troops. Before it was finished, the flu would kill 50,000 Canadians, roughly as many as had died in the various battles of the Great War. Despite its various menaces, however, the immediate postwar period could also be seen as a time of great opportunity and promise. The war was, after all, finally over. Perhaps Canadians could now begin to enjoy what their government had for over four years been telling them would be the fruits of victory. Like most places in Canada, the city of Winnipeg was caught up in both the menace and the exhilaration, which would play themselves out through the Winnipeg General Strike.

The year 1994 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, one of the best-known events in modern Canadian history. It also marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the composition of a lengthy history of the strike from the strikers' perspective which was published in 1920 as *The Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike* and reprinted in 1973 as *Winnipeg 1919: the strikers' own history of the Winnipeg General Strike.* In one of those not infrequent ironies of history, the strikers lost their strike in 1919, but won the subsequent war of words for the verdict of history. The general interpretation of the events of 1919 produced by the strikers at the time, relying heavily on the pages of their own newspaper the *Western Labor News,* has become part of the received standard version.

The striker account of the events of 1919 appears to have been put together by some of the strike "leaders" then in Stony Mountain Penitentiary awaiting trial on criminal charges of seditious conspiracy. Not surprisingly, it is not only a highly partisan document, but a very defensive one, eager to impress upon its readers that the strike was nothing other than a legitimate expression of labour activity. Much of the subsequent historical writing about the strike has treated this complex event along the lines first developed in the strikers' own history. The result has been the emergence of a somewhat one-dimensional and monolithic view of the strike. The account which follows examines in detail only a few of the more important components of this fascinating event. It attempts to introduce some multiple perspectives and perhaps to raise some new questions.

THE STRIKE AS INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

The labour disputes at the base of the Winnipeg General Strike occurred in the city's metal fabrication and construction industries, both of which had lengthy histories of unrest. The situations within the two industries were quite different. The metal fabrication industry needed to adjust to peacetime conditions without

government weapons contracts, while the construction sector was gearing up for a building boom deferred by the war. As well, employers in the metal industry were extremely hostile to organized labour. In both industries, the key issue was regarded by labour as employer recognition of the right to collective bargaining through the kinds of union organization selected by the workers.

In the metal industry, the ironmasters refused to bargain with the Metal Trades Council, the central union to which all nineteen craft unions in the industry — including several railway unions — belonged. This issue of recognition had been raised in 1918, but had been avoided. In 1918 the workers had struck for higher pay and collective bargaining, and had settled for wage concessions. The employers insisted that they were not rejecting collective bargaining, but the Metal Trades Council's definition of it. Management was quite prepared to deal with particular craft unions, but not with an industrial umbrella organization that even included outside unions, such as the railway ones. It insisted that its understanding of collective bargaining was the commonly accepted one, and the claim was at least arguable. What the metal workers wanted was to move to a new form of collective bargaining, one which had been recognized in the shipbuilding industry in Vancouver in 1918 under wartime conditions, and was now being advocated in the United States as a radical alternative to traditional trade unionism.

In the building trades, the Winnipeg Building Trades Council was attempting in 1919 to assert for the first time a similar industry-wide responsibility for negotiations with the Builders Exchange. The builders admitted they liked the idea of being able to settle with everybody at once, but insisted they simply could not afford the wage demands of the Building Trades Council. Collective bargaining became an issue because the Builders Exchange refused to bargain with the Building Trades Council unless their wage offer of 10 cents an hour across-the-board was accepted. For its part, the BTC acknowledged that its position had passed well beyond the acceptable bounds of the international trades unions of its members, warning that the internationals would not provide strike benefits in the Winnipeg dispute. The Building Trades Council nevertheless struck on 1 May 1919, and were joined by the Metal Trades Council a day later.

Labour unrest in Winnipeg was hardly confined to these two industries. All workers felt threatened by a postwar inflation that threatened real income, and buying power had been constantly eroded in Winnipeg since 1910. In some industries such as the baking and confectionary sector, organizers were struggling to obtain initial employer recognition of unions; the baking workers would strike on 14 May. Some local unions, including the telephone operators and the police, had settled with employers in April of 1919, but were not entirely happy with their agreements. The street railway employees were one very large union that had not been able to agree to a new contract at all. They voted 912 to 79 to strike, and then agreed to conciliation under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of the Province of Manitoba. Labour in Winnipeg was distinctly restive in 1919.

The Building Trades Council and the Metal Trades Council both took their disputes to the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, which after some debate agreed to distribute ballots authorizing a general strike (often called a general "sympathetic" strike) in support of BTC and MTC demands. From the perspective of the Trades and Labor Council, labour's objective in 1919 was quite simply the recognition of "collective bargaining" in the metal fabrication and construction

Manitoba Archives

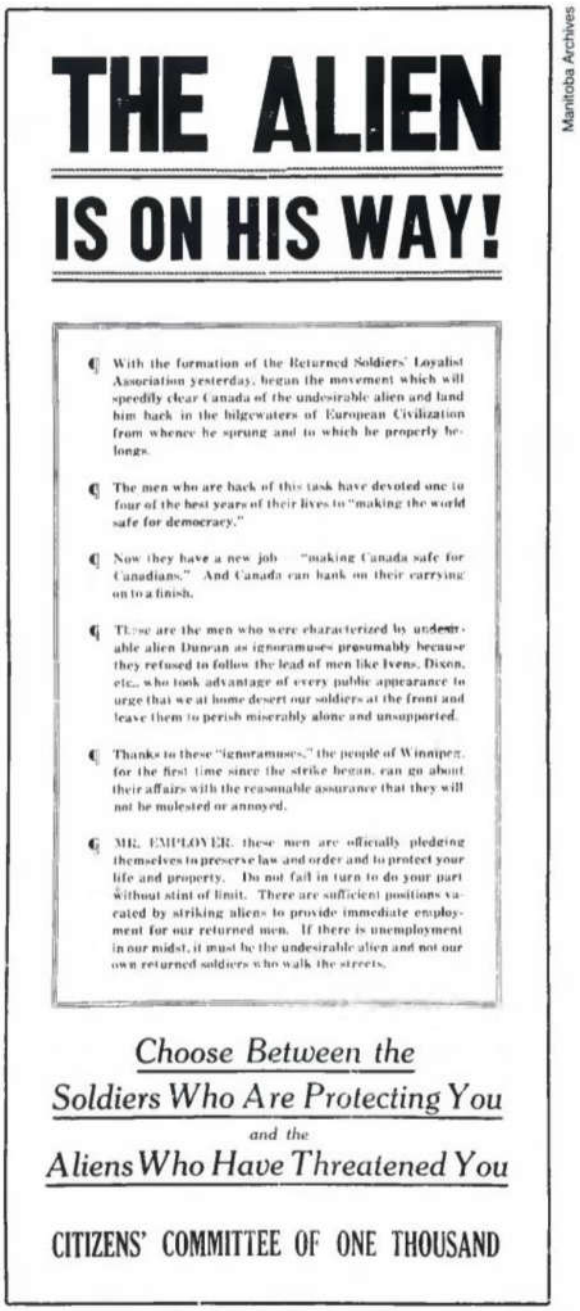
Members of the Strike Committee — one of whom may be Helen Armstrong — pose on the steps of the Winnipeg Labour Temple with members of the Defence Committee in late 1919.

industries of Winnipeg. Before we turn to the question of whether the general strike was the appropriate medium to achieve this objective, it is worth emphasizing that the recognition of collective bargaining which was the basic issue was not really very simple at all. "Organization by Industry" was a well-known concept in British unionism before the war, having been adopted by the miners, builders, and transport workers. Such an approach to collective bargaining avoided what employers understandably preferred: a tactic of divide and conquer with negotiating unions in weak positions. It also matched the growing tendency of industries to rationalize. But the concept of collective bargaining at stake in Winnipeg in 1919 was an advanced one that had not yet become the standard anywhere in North America, except perhaps in the Vancouver shipyard industry under wartime conditions. To have won widespread recognition of this interpretation of collective bargaining would have been a great victory for Winnipeg labour in 1919.

THE STRIKE AS LABOUR RADICALISM

In order to achieve what were in 1919 fairly advanced labour objectives, the Winnipeg labour movement turned to the general strike as a weapon. The general strike had long been employed in Europe as the ultimate weapon of the class struggle. It involved a sufficiently total withdrawal of services to topple the capitalistic state, and some European syndicalists insisted that without a revolutionary intent there was not a genuine general strike. In British and North American labour development, the general strike was an inevitable result of the need to find new sources of leverage in labour disputes. Obviously the simultaneous withdrawal of services could be an effective labour weapon, if it could be executed without seriously threatening the political fabric. One way of limiting the damage had been by defining the time period of the withdrawal of services.

Unfortunately, it was all too easy to confuse syndicalist general strikes with pragmatic general strikes, particularly when the Canadian labour movement simultaneously appropriated much of the terminology and rhetoric of syndicalism. The period after 1900 had witnessed a new radicalization of the Canadian labour movement, particularly in the West. The labour movement before the turn of the century had been largely dominated by traditional trade unionists, organized into unions of skilled crafts devoted to improving conditions of work "pure and simple". The "pure and simples" rejected the notion of the politicization of labour questions or the entry of labour leaders into the political arena. This attitude was often called "Gomperism" after its leading international exponent, Samuel Gompers, the head of the American Federation of Labor. In the years after 1900, however, Canada experienced a sub-



THE ALIEN
IS ON HIS WAY!

¶ With the formation of the Returned Soldiers' Loyalist Association yesterday, began the movement which will speedily clear Canada of the undesirable alien and land him back in the bilgewaters of European Civilization from whence he sprung and to which he properly belongs.

¶ The men who are back of this task have devoted one to four of the best years of their lives to "making the world safe for democracy."

¶ Now they have a new job "making Canada safe for Canadians." And Canada can bank on their carrying on to a finish.

¶ These are the men who were characterized by undesirable alien Dunean as ignoramuses presumably because they refused to follow the lead of men like Ivens, Dixon, etc., who took advantage of every public appearance to urge that we at home desert our soldiers at the front and leave them to perish miserably alone and unsupported.

¶ Thanks to these "ignoramuses," the people of Winnipeg, for the first time since the strike began, can go about their affairs with the reasonable assurance that they will not be molested or annoyed.

¶ MR. EMPLOYER, these men are officially pledging themselves to preserve law and order and to protect your life and property. Do not fail in turn to do your part without stint of limit. There are sufficient positions vacated by striking aliens to provide immediate employment for our returned men. If there is unemployment in our midst, it must be the undesirable alien and not our own returned soldiers who walk the streets.

Choose Between the
Soldiers Who Are Protecting You
and the
Aliens Who Have Threatened You

CITIZENS' COMMITTEE OF ONE THOUSAND

Manitoba Archives

This advertisement from the "Winnipeg Telegram" for 6 June 1919 demonstrates the fear felt by many middle class Winnipeggers as the strike intensified.

stantial influx of immigrants from the industrial centres of the British Isles, familiar with new views of unionism and new ideologies of the class struggle. These men were militant and articulate. They were also far less committed to traditional trade unionism.

During the Great War the labour movement became allied and associated with political parties such as the Social Democratic Party or the Socialist Party of Canada. The membership criteria for political parties was considerably different than that of skilled trade unions, and a greater range of membership helped add to the ideological mix of these years. As well as the "pure and simples," the labour movement now contained reformers of a variety of beliefs (most of them Utopian in one way or another, some of them social gospel ministers). By the close of the war, labour in Canada was trying to move away from Gomperism, but how the new order would work out in practice was not yet clear.

What was clear as the war ended was that labour was more overtly political than ever before, and that some circles had taken over the vocabulary if not the intentions of the European left. At a meeting held at the Walker Theatre in December 1918 co-sponsored by the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council and the Winnipeg branch of the Socialist Party of Canada, the agenda eschewed "lunchbucket" matters in favour of resolutions on controversial matters of government policy, such as the continued use of orders-in-council under the War Measures Act, military involvement in Russia, and the use of censorship. Many of the same matters came up again in Calgary in March of 1919, at the convention that would recommend the organization of the One Big Union. This meeting carried resolutions calling for an end to capitalism and the introduction of "Industrial Soviet Control", as well as expressions of sympathy for "the aims and purposes of the Russian Bolshevik and German Spartacan Revolutions" and the "full acceptance of the principle of 'Proletarian Dictatorship.'" The Calgary delegates also indicated their impatience with parliamentary government, corrupted as it was by its capitalistic nature, and resolved no longer to plead for legislation to improve the lot of labour — what they described as "the passing of legal palliatives which do not palliate." They expressed a distinct preference for improving conditions by industrial action.

One form of possible industrial action was the general strike. In 1919, however, there were precious few working examples of a non-syndicalist general strike from which experience could be taken. The 1918 Winnipeg general strike had not really been very total, and the Seattle general strike of January 1919 had quickly collapsed, in large part because of conceptual difficulties the strikers had not anticipated. Confusion was further enhanced in Winnipeg in 1919 by the lurking presence of the concept of the "One Big Union". The OBU, not yet organized at the time of the Winnipeg strike, sought to organize all workers regardless of skills into one single labour organization, and had been consciously associated at Calgary with Russian examples. The threat of the OBU certainly led government and private citizens alike to fear Bolshevism.

The most serious initial problem faced by those organizing the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg was how to effect a total shutdown of the city without either destroying the body politic or the well-being of the strikers themselves. The organizers never did resolve this problem. Ernest Robinson, secretary of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, had told the press in his announcement of the strike: "No exceptions are anticipated in this strike. All public utilities will be tied

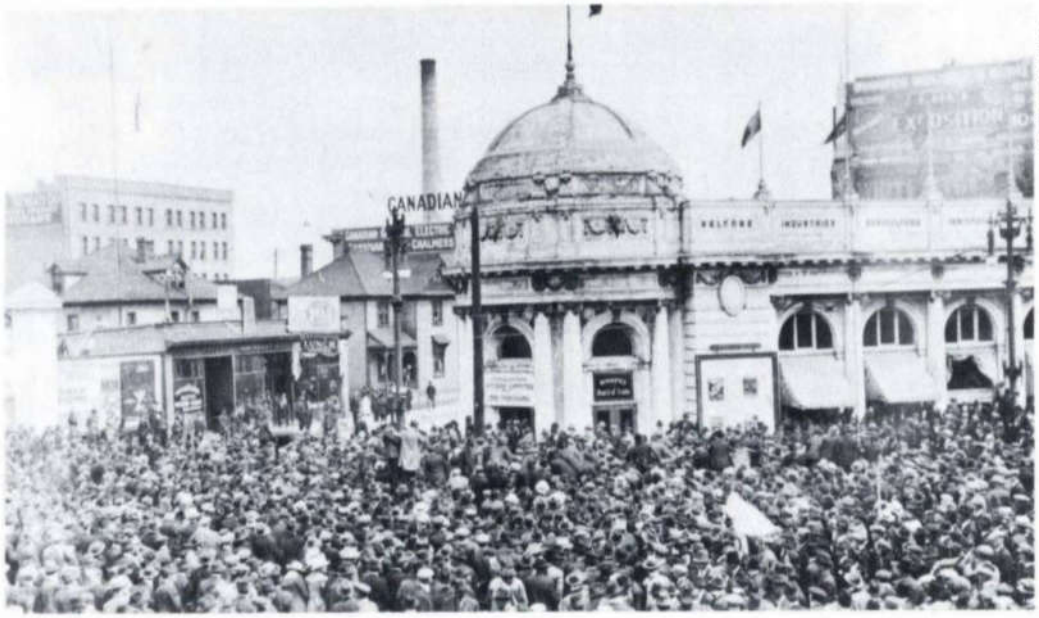
up in order to enforce the principle of collective bargaining." The strike committee soon began making exceptions, however. The first concession came when the police were requested to remain on duty to prevent the authorities from declaring martial law. Others soon followed.

Editor William Ivens in the "Strike Bulletin" of the *Western Labor News* attempted on 17 May to explain "WHY SOME INDUSTRIES ARE RUNNING." He wrote:

> Theatres and Picture shows are running under strike permit so that the worker can keep off the streets. Milk and bread concerns are running under permits to feed the people. Hospitals are given permits so that the sick may not suffer. Water is kept at low pressure rather than cut off so that the workers shall be able to get it. Light is supplied for the same reason. ... So it is with all the industries that work under permit of the Strike Committee. They are supplying the prime necessities of life to the workers so that the fight may be carried on until it is won. All these concerns are organized fully, and could be stopped at a minute's notice, but for the present the Strike Committee believes that it is better to let them run; hence its order for them to stay on the job under permit.

Such an explanation did nothing to assuage the conviction of both the authorities and the non-striking middle classes that the strikers intended to overthrow existing authority. Indeed, in its assumption of power to "permit" whatever activities it saw fit, the Strike Committee only evoked paroxysms of hostility from many. The little placards which read "Permitted By Authority Of Strike Committee" became to the opponents of the strike perfect symbols of its intentions. Methodist missionary John Maclean wrote in his diary on the day Ivens' words appeared on the streets, "The labour men have the upper hand, and so far as they can are showing Bolshevik methods."

It is most probably true that the Strike Committee — as its members always claimed — had no intention of overthrowing duly established government by violent means. If intending such an overthrow is the only definition of "revolutionary," these men were certainly not revolutionaries. At the same time, it would be a mistake to see the strike as nothing more than a traditional conservative labour action. The subsequent government prosecutions of the "strike leaders" for seditious conspiracy tended to force everybody into a defensive posture about the strike's intentions. The protestations of innocence have obscured the fact that many of those involved in the strike believed in the need for extreme social and economic change, including the ultimate elimination of capitalism. As Ernest Robinson explained to a strikers' meeting on 18 May, "We have withdrawn labour from all industry, and it will stay withdrawn until the bosses realize that they cannot stand against the masses of labour. If we can control industrial production now, at this time, we can control it for all time to come, and we can control the Government of this country too."



Manitoba Archives

A large crowd of strike supporters surrounds the Industrial Bureau building, headquarters of anti-strike forces, on 3 June. The crowd was returning from a meeting with Premier Norris. A Committee of One Thousand sign was pulled off the building by the crowd.

The strikers' history of the Seattle General Strike, which was not written by men under indictment for seditious conspiracy as was the Winnipeg equivalent,

Manitoba Archives

The home of financier Sir Augustus Nanton was typical of the mansions occupied by Winnipeg business leaders. During the strike Nanton, in response to threats, patrolled the grounds at night with his chauffeur, gardener and under-gardener while his wife and daughters stayed with friends.

managed to capture a distinction that has seemed to be missing in Winnipeg when it argued:

> If by revolution is meant violence, forcible taking over of property, the killing or maiming of men, surely no group of workers dreamed of such action. But if by revolution is meant that a Great Change is coming over the face of the world, which will transform our method of carrying on industry, and will go deep into the very sources of our lives, to bring joy and freedom in place of heaviness and fear — then we do believe in such a Great Change and that our General Strike was one very definite step towards it.

In short, what the strike committees in Seattle and Winnipeg were feeling their way toward through their general strikes was a way of achieving great transformations outside the normal political channels through non-violent and non-syndicalist means.

WINNIPEG'S CLASS DIVISIONS

One of the features of the Strike most difficult to classify is the indisputable evidence of class conflict in 1919 Winnipeg. The extent of such conflict, acknowledged by many contemporaries and most later historians, to some degree cuts against arguments that the strike was merely an attempt by labour to achieve limited industrial goals. On the other hand, that the two diametrically opposing sides did not produce a real bloodbath — for the number of casualties from the Winnipeg General Strike were miniscule — despite much provocation, is some of the best evidence available that violent revolution was not part of anyone's agenda in Winnipeg in 1919. There is no doubt that the strike committee did its best to keep the strikers off the street and out of trouble. And, it must be added, the opposition was by and large equally restrained as well. Much of the violence resulted from the activities of the returned soldiers.

At the same time, there can be little doubt that Winnipeg was a city divided — not merely socio-economically but also geographically — along class lines. Curiously enough, the critical class division occurred among those residents of Winnipeg so often regarded as ethnically homogeneous: those of British origin. The leadership of this group neatly divided into two camps, the business elite and the labour elite. The two elites lived in different parts of the city, and would continue their battles for a generation after the strike.

Winnipeg contained a business elite which had run the city since its beginning as an extension of its economic life, and which had no intention of surrendering its control. For the most part, this group had come from central Canada, especially rural and small-town Ontario, migrating west either as youngsters with their parents or as young men starting a career. These were self-made men, lacking in liberal education or broad horizons, who had risen to success by dint of their often ruthless efforts at exploitation of both the environment and their workers. They believed in the "survival of the fittest." They controlled city government partly because they spent so much time maintaining their dominance, partly because of a voting franchise that favoured property ownership and positively discriminated against the poor. Property qualifications and other requirements (including British citizenship) kept registered municipal voters as late as 1906 to 7,784 out of a total population over 100,000. After 1890 the vote was further stacked by the introduction of plural voting, in which a citizen could vote in any ward "in which he had been rated for

the necessary property qualification." Not surprisingly, the civic government resulting from such dominance favoured development and material expansion at the expense of most other values.

By 1919, the business leadership and the middle class which supported its values (and sought entrance into its ranks) had come to reside chiefly in certain districts of the southern and western sections of the city, mainly — although not exclusively — south of the Assiniboine River and west of the Red River. A few business leaders still lived downtown in mansions or in luxury hotels. More of the elite lived on Armstrong's Point and along Wellington Crescent, including adjacent Crescentwood, the sites of the city's largest and most exclusive mansions. Less affluent professionals and middle managers lived in newly-developed River Heights, parts of Crescentwood, and in Wolseley, especially near and along the river. Many of their houses still survive in the city.

By 1919 Winnipeg also had a rapidly-developing labour elite, consisting of men and women who had come into positions of prominence within various labour unions in the city. Almost without exception, such individuals had been born and educated (often on the job) in the industrial centres of the British Isles. They had grown up in both an urban and an industrial environment, developing both a working-class consciousness and strategies for articulating it. Many were members of the Labour Party of Britain, most were socialists of one sort or another. They were hardly ideologically homogeneous. According to the later recollection of one of their number, the period of the Great War had been one "of the conflict of ideas, a war of ideologies and at times quite savage too." Although often self-educated and hardly in agreement with each other, these leaders were far more conscious of the contemporary world of ideas and ideology than were their counterparts in the Winnipeg business elite. Over ninety percent of these men had immigrated to Winnipeg as adults, mainly in the years between 1900 and 1912.

Like the business elite, Winnipeg's labour leaders lived together in a small number of districts in the city inhabited almost exclusively by skilled workers. Most of these districts were near major railway yards, which served as the employment magnets for such individuals. The principal districts included Fort Rouge in the southwest section of the city, St. John's in the near North End, Weston, and much of the West End itself.

The conflict between the commercial and the labour elites in Winnipeg, which coalesced in the 1918 and 1919 general strikes, continued long afterwards in municipal politics, with the Citizens' League (an apparent successor to the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand) being systematically opposed by Labour. At the mayoral and aldermanic levels, the confrontation was very much between the Canadian-born business elite claiming to be politically non-aligned, and the British-born labour elite who had been involved in the strike. The Labour group changed even less than the Citizens' League in the generation after 1919. Before the close of the Second World War, the only successful "ethnic" politicians were Jews of British birth. During the twenty-five years after 1919, the business interests never once lost control of the Winnipeg City Council.

THE STRIKE AND THE "ALIEN"

There was, of course, a growing "third force" in Winnipeg after the turn of the century, although the city continued to be a "British" one through the period of the 1919 strike. As we have seen, a Canadian-born member of the business elite of British background did not necessarily have much in common with a recently-immigrated British worker from an urban-industrial background. The city had grown rapidly after 1900, with immigration about equally divided between industrial British and the so-called "new" immigrants, mainly Slavs and Jews. Many of these new immigrants came from regions officially part of Germany (such as Poland) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (such as Ukraine), which made them "enemy aliens" once the Great War began.

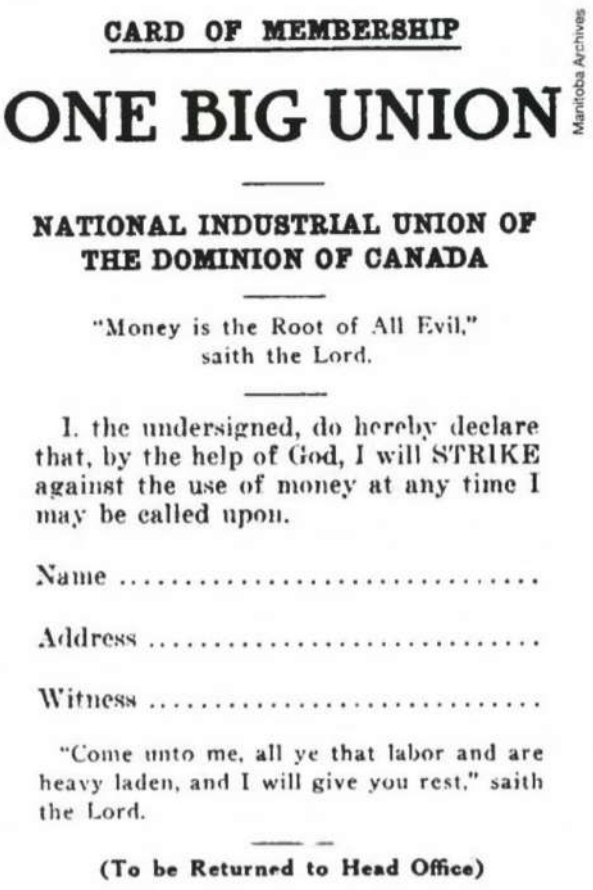
The new immigrants lived almost exclusively in the North End of Winnipeg, once described as "one gigantic melting pot north of the CPR tracks". The North End attracted the newcomers partly because of the presence of cheap housing, but also by the growth of familiar economic and cultural institutions. Both the Ukrainian and the Jewish communities had active social and cultural lives, with a number of organizations and newspapers espousing radical political beliefs. Both communities had come under heavy attack from the Canadian government during the Great War because of the number of "enemy aliens" in their midst and because of the presence of radical political beliefs among some of their members. The return of the demobilized soldier introduced a new element into the existing hostility to the "alien," who was now being accused of having taken jobs that should be held by returning soldiers.

By the end of 1918, the immigrant community of Winnipeg had been fairly disorganized by the political persecution of the Canadian government, which seemed only to increase in intensity as the war drew to a close. Focus shifted from the immigrant's association with the enemy to his association with revolutionary political movements in Russia and central Europe. Many within the Canadian government became persuaded that these "foreign" agitators would infect Canadian labour and especially the demobilized veterans with their radical ideas. This was one of the ways in which labour, the immigrant, and the veterans could be

linked together. Another was revealed in Winnipeg in January 1919, when mobs of returning soldiers wrecked the local offices of the Socialist Party of Canada, terrorized immigrants on the streets, and demonstrated against a meatpacking plant alleged to have employed "alien" labour. The use of the plural "mobs" rather than the singular "a mob" is important here, since it is not clear whether these various incidents involved the same people. They probably did not. In any case, these events led the Manitoba government to create the Alien Investigation Board, an agency instructed to issue registration cards (for employment purposes) only to enemy aliens who were "loyal" Canadians, based on the testimony of two reliable persons. Many aliens labelled disloyal were subsequently scheduled for deportation by the government. Over 3,000 cases had been processed by the Board by the time of the strike. The way in which the immigrant seemed to be related to labour and to the returned soldier in early 1919 was chiefly as victim and scapegoat.

The confrontation between returned soldier and enemy alien took on a new dimension in the week leading up to the general strike. This conflict was quite separate from what was happening with organized labour in the city. On 1 May an Eastern Member of Parliament alleged in the House of Commons that the Manitoba government was protecting enemy aliens from deportation, a charge vehemently denied by the government. The next day, the Great War Veterans Association began proceedings as common nuisances in County Court against those aliens labelled by the Alien Investigation Board as "undesirable citizens," demanding their deportation and the confiscation of all but $75.00 of their property for the benefit of soldiers' orphans and widows. The prosecutions had been suggested by Premier T.C. Norris in a meeting with veterans, when he claimed the AIB had no authority to deport. At a mass meeting of returned soldiers at Market Square on 10 May, resolutions were drawn up demanding that the provincial government take steps to intern and deport aliens, or resign and appeal to the people for the power to deport them. The *Tribune* on 13 May reported a dominion-wide veterans' campaign against radical bolshevik newspapers which it was claimed the soldiers held responsible for the current industrial unrest and upheaval. Not a single "new immigrant" — enemy alien or otherwise — was actively involved on the leadership level of the 1919 Winnipeg strike, however. Prominent Jewish activist Moses Almazoff pointedly spent the entire strike period at Gimli over 60 miles away on Lake Winnipeg.

After the strike began, the alien continued to be a victimized football among the contending parties. Both sides attempted to win the support of the returned soldiers by promising action on the so-called "alien question" and other issues high on the veterans' list of priorities. A meeting attended by 3,000 returned soldiers on 15 May, the first day of the strike, resulted in the rejection of resolutions from the executives of the major veterans' associations calling for strict neutrality in the context of the support of law and order. The gathering instead agreed on a resolution calling for labour and the returned soldier to get together after the strike to "discuss the deportation of the enemy alien." The best-known example of efforts to appeal to the soldier was the famous banner carried in the parade of the "Loyal Veterans" on 4 June, which read, "We will maintain constituted authority, law & order. Down with the High Cost of Living. To Hell with the alien enemy. God save the King." New immigrants were among the strikers, demonstrators, and onlookers at the various crowd events of the strike. They can often be identified by their apparel in the crowd photographs. The media insisted that most of the trouble at the 10 June "riot" on Main Street had been caused by "enemy aliens," but such assertions have not proved documentable. What is certain is that both the dead men of Bloody Saturday were immigrants from the North End.



CARD OF MEMBERSHIP

ONE BIG UNION

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNION OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA

"Money is the Root of All Evil," saith the Lord.

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that, by the help of God, I will STRIKE against the use of money at any time I may be called upon.

Name .....

Address .....

Witness .....

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," saith the Lord.

(To be Returned to Head Office)

Manitoba Archives

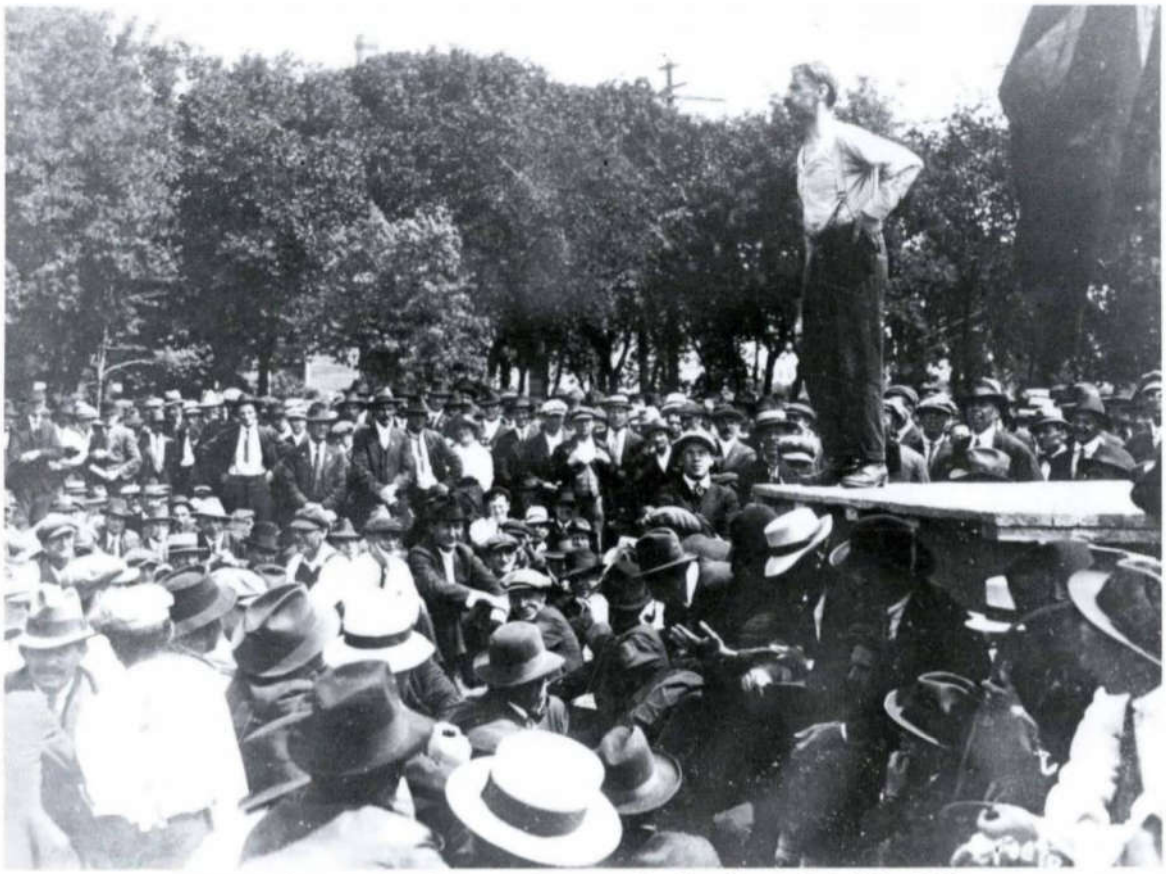
A membership card for the OBU.

Manitoba Archives

Mayor Gray addresses anti-strike veterans at City Hall, 4 June 1919 (above).
Anti-strike veterans challenge "the alien enemy" in a parade (below).

WE WILL MAINTAIN
CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY, LAW & ORDER.
DOWN WITH THE HIGH COST OF LIVING
TO HELL WITH THE ALIEN ENEMY
GOD SAVE THE KING

At the same time that a number of strike leaders were arrested on the night of 16/17 June, the federal government also arrested four aliens, one of whom was a wounded war veteran picked up by mistake without a warrant. It subsequently sent a number of aliens to a detention camp at Kapuskasing, and would according to Labour Minister Gideon Robertson, deport from across Canada a substantial number of men, mainly non-British subjects, under the 1919 emergency legislation. The comment of police magistrate Hugh John Macdonald about the aliens — "If the Government persists in the course that it is now adopting the foreign element here will soon be as gentle and easily controlled as a lot of sheep" — has been often quoted. But while the Union government's treatment of the aliens was clearly part of its overall response to its fears of the revolutionary nature of the Winnipeg General Strike, there is precious little evidence that the individuals involved had played any key leadership role in the strike itself. To talk about "foreign" strike leaders would be as misleading as to ignore the presence of the "radical alien" in Winnipeg in 1919.



Manitoba Archives

Roger E. Bray preaches to the converted at a pro-strike rally at Victoria Park, 13 June 1919.

THE RETURNING SOLDIERS

Scholarship on the Winnipeg strike does not have a convenient place for the returning soldiers, who for the most part seem to be a relatively faceless mass of men of confusing beliefs and sentiments. Only a handful of veteran leaders emerge from the crowd, and even their activities have not been carefully investigated. One general approach would be to regard the returned veterans as a wild card element quite independent from the other players, operating with their own agenda and under their own rules, and not really part of the strike proper. While such an interpretation has much to recommend it, there are some problems. The returned veterans may have pursued their own agenda within the extraordinary conditions presented by the strike, but their actions had a good deal of effect on the image many people had of the strike at the time and have had since. This is particularly true of the events of Bloody Saturday, which were touched off by veterans supporting the strike against the desires of the leaders of the strike committee itself. Moreover, neither side in the strike ever publicly repudiated the activities of the veterans, and indeed, both strike leaders and opposition sought to woo veteran support at every opportunity. Indeed, the strike committee admitted several veterans' leaders to its ranks as observers in the early days of the strike.

By the spring of 1919, Winnipeg had thousands of demobilized soldiers within its boundaries, most of them unemployed and at loose ends. The numbers increased almost daily. No systematic analysis of the temper of the soldiers has been attempted, and probably none is possible. Scattered evidence suggests that the veterans were disillusioned and angry. Attempting to ascertain the attitude of the veterans to the strike is equally difficult. There were a number of veterans' associations in Winnipeg in 1919, most of which remained officially neutral on the strike. The largest body was the Great War Veterans Association, which claimed over 10,000 Winnipeg members. Its secretary estimated that it was composed locally of "37 percent employers and 57 percent of employees and the other 15 percent of different classes." Not surprisingly, many

members of the GWVA gave unofficial support to the strike. Other organizations included the Army and Navy Veterans' Association, the Imperial Veterans of Canada, and the Loyalist Veterans' Association (or Loyalist Returned Soldier Association). The first two remained unsympathetically neutral during the strike, and the last was formed by young lawyer F.G. Thompson in opposition to the pro-strike veterans, in order to organize counter-demonstrations and to recruit special constables for the police force.

There is no doubt that the mass intervention of the returned soldiers into the strike at the end of May greatly changed its character, whether anybody liked it or not. Up to the active involvement of the veterans, the strike had been a fairly quiet affair, with little evidence of the gathering of large crowds with their potential violence. This escalation of the strike by the veterans was led initially by those favourable to the strike, despite various efforts on the part of the opposition to keep the veterans passively neutral. Leadership was taken by A.E. Moore, a member of the provincial Alien Investigation Board (and later head of the Canadian Legion) and Roger Bray, a British-born former Methodist lay preacher and socialist. The veterans at this point employed the same strategy that other soldier meetings had used earlier in different circumstances. It consisted of confronting the provincial premier with calls for action, in this case special legislation making collective bargaining compulsory. On 31 May the veterans followed up on their demands with the first mass march since the strike had begun.

The marchers of 31 May appear to have supported the strikers, but were not themselves formally part of organized labour. In their meeting with premier Norris, they booed profiteers like Joseph Flavelle. A voice in the crowd called out, "there are 349 millionaires in Canada," and soldier spokesman Bray quickly added, "They have purchased real estate to the extent of thousands of dollars and have made money out of the innocent, while we were over there defending the land we love." The soldiers complained about rent gouging and the Committee of One Thousand, which Bray labelled "the same bunch of boodlers who plundered this Province to the verge of bankruptcy." They marched from the Legislative Building to City Hall, where they confronted Mayor Charles Gray. They then moved on to St. Boniface and ended at Victoria Park. This march was for the most part peaceful, the only violence the alleged overturning of a Coca-Cola waggon at Eaton's warehouse. But a new volatility was introduced into the situation.

That volatility was greatly enhanced a few days later, when volunteers in large numbers lined up on Broadway outside the old buildings of the University of Manitoba, joining a large group of veterans organized by F.G. Thompson in a "loyalist" parade to the Manitoba legislature. The strikers insisted that this counterparade was composed largely of "lawyers, insurance, and real estate clerks," although Thompson maintained that many of his veterans were still in their khakis, so recently demobbed they had no time to obtain civilian clothes. While the Loyal veterans marched around the downtown area meeting with obviously sympathetic provincial and civic leaders, soldier strikers 4,000 strong marched through the tree-lined residential districts of south Winnipeg, singing or whistling as they marched. Not surprisingly, Mayor Gray soon thereafter issued a proclamation banning parades, and the pro-strike veterans turned to holding regular mass meetings in Victoria Park, which came to be known as the "Soldiers' Parliament." Roger Bray drew increasing attention from the authorities and the police spies, one of whom informed the RNWMP on 14 June that he was "at the present time the most dangerous person in the City." Bray was alleged to have planned a scheme to obtain arms by a raid on the Minto Armoury. It was not surprising he was arrested on the night of 16/17 June.

The veterans made one more critical intervention before the strike was officially called off on 26 June. In response to the arrests of 16/17 June, including that of Roger Bray, a mass meeting of soldiers in Market Square on 20 June decided to hold a silent parade of veterans to march the following day. Desperate last-minute efforts on the part of the authorities to prevent the parade failed, and "Bloody Saturday" went on as scheduled. Although the events of this day would produce the dominant images of the strike in the public memory, they were decidedly anti-climatic. Whether the strike and the behaviour of the soldiers can be totally isolated in separate compartments remains an interesting if probably unresolvable question.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Until very recently, the role of women in the strike was generally neglected. In most of the literature, women have appeared briefly only in supportive and supporting roles, mainly as the helpmates of various strike leaders. We now begin to appreciate the extent to which women were active strikers, and one female labour leader of the time has emerged as a major figure. At the same time, the relationship of women with the strike was infinitely more complex than simply as strikers. Women were also active as strikebreakers, particularly through the volunteer efforts of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand. They were also part of the crowds of bystanders, sightseers, and victims, at the major rallies and demonstrations. Even if they remained at home, they were the ones who most often had to cope on a daily basis with the absence of goods and services, as well as the absence of income. They were also forced

to deal with unemployed members of the family around the house.

Not surprisingly, given the general historiography of the strike, the role of women as strikers has been most extensively recovered in recent years. Not only is the bias of scholarship toward labour relevant here, but the evidence is better for active participation in the strike than for most other aspects. The Great War had witnessed a considerable upsurge in efforts to organize female labour in Canada, reflecting the extent of their participation in the labour force. In Winnipeg by 1919, women constituted roughly one-quarter of that labour force, mainly working in the service, clerical, and retail sectors of the economy, although some women were employed in manufacturing (especially in the biscuit and confectionary trade). Advertisements early in 1919 called for women to join the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses' Union (Local 592), urging "Waitresses too, Come on girls — wouldn't you like to be organized like the telephone girls?" As this query suggests, the "Hello Girls" of the Manitoba Telephone System had already been organized in 1917 as part of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the union had gone on strike for three hours on 1 May 1917 to force the creation of an investigatory board which recommended a substantial increase in wages and decrease in working hours. The telephone operators were part of the 1918 sympathetic strike. The Women's Labour League that same year organized a strike of non-unionized retail clerks against the F.W. Woolworth Company, which was lost to an injunction. Organizers were also active in the food industry.

Manitoba Archives

Female volunteers manage the pumps at a Winnipeg gas station at the height of the strike.

The "Bread and Cake" workers in the bakery and confectionary industry were the first to go on strike in 1919 after the decision had been made to call a general strike. More than 500 workers, mainly women, were off the job on 14 May, and they were joined by several hundred more the next day. When the sympathetic strike began on 15 May 1919, it was actually the telephone workers who led the way, punching off without replacements at the end of their first shift, which ended at 7 a.m. Many wholesale and retail clerks also joined the strike, although the shopping districts of the city were never entirely shut down. Figures for the total number of strikers are notoriously inaccurate, but a minimum of several thousand female workers were among the more than 25,000 Winnipeggers who went on strike in mid-May 1919.

The major figure among the women's labour movement in Winnipeg was clearly Helen Armstrong, head of the local branch of the Women's Labour League. She was doubtless one of the two women included in the frequently reprinted group photograph of the strike committee. Helen was also the wife of George Armstrong, one of the strike leaders, but she was no passive helpmate. She has regrettably still not achieved her rightful place in the history of either the strike or the women's movement in Manitoba. The adjectives most often associated with Helen Armstrong were "fiery"and "feisty." Having organized several strikes in the female sector during the war, Helen was largely responsible for the women's kitchen maintained by the Women's League to feed striking women. She was arrested several times during the strike for urging workers to join it, as well as for inciting strikers to violence. On one occasion she was held in jail for some days while the authorities refused to grant bail. For Helen Armstrong, feminism and labour activity went together. At a mass meeting after the strike, she told her listeners that "Women's vote had given us the club. Now we wanted women to use it." Eastern newspapers referred to her during the strike as "business manager for the Women's Unions," and when she later toured Eastern Canada to rouse support for the arrested strike leaders, dubbed her "The Wild Woman of the West."

Probably an equal number of women as those on strike responded to the calls of the Citizens' Committee for volunteers to keep services running. Women appear to have been largely responsible for the reopening of the gasoline stations on 21 May and for the return to the streets of the newspapers a few days later. The place where women were most utilized, however, was at the switchboards of the Manitoba Telephone Company,

despite the best efforts of the operators to prevent the "daughters of the wealthy" from taking over by pulling all the fuses. Nevertheless, by 28 May, there were over 600 women working on the telephone exchange. Volunteer workers — the strikers called them "scabs" — had no easy road. They did unfamiliar work often under conditions of physical harassment and verbal abuse. Helen Armstrong was on one occasion committed to trial on charges of inciting two colleagues to assault female *Tribune* employees selling newspapers on the streets. Telephone operators were vulnerable to verbal harassment, but had their own remedy. According to the *Tribune:* "'Are you a volunteer?' he coos disarmingly. 'Yes,' the unsuspecting phone girl responds. 'Well, I don't care to talk to a - - - - - - - scab,' the man responds. 'Suit yourself,' the girl says and unscrews the little electric globe which registers a call from that line and puts in a small piece of cork."

Contemporary photographs of crowd scenes during the strike often contain at least a scattering of women, always formally dressed for the occasion. An especially large number turned out for "Ladies' Day" at Victoria Park on 12 June. Large numbers of women strikers occupied seats of honour near the front platform, and at the conclusion of a speech by J.S. Woodsworth calling for the emancipation of women and the equality of the sexes, the females shouted together, "We'll fight to the end!" There were women in the crowd on Main Street on the afternoon of "Bloody Saturday," despite Mayor Gray's warning to women and children to stay off the streets. Several women were injured that day, and four were actually arrested. One woman, reportedly a "foreigner", set fire to the overturned streetcar so familiar in strike iconography.

THE OPPOSITION TO THE STRIKE

Perhaps the aspect of the strike about which we know the least is how it was handled within the bosom of the home and family. According to the official striker view, women were remarkably supportive. James Winning, President of the Winnipeg TLC, reported on one occasion, "Mothers have gone to the corner store and returned without milk, and have gone home and said, 'Stay with it John. The women will do without milk, and we will make some shift for the kiddies, but you must win." Women were doubtless often behind their men demanding a living wage. But in his autobiographical memoir *The Boy from Winnipeg* James Gray offers an alternative scenario. Gray's father was one of the 1919 sympathetic strikers, and his mother never understood why the family should be without income in order to support the highly skilled (and relatively well-paid) metal workers. According to Gray, the strike provoked a family political crisis and greatly stressed the marriage. The Gray family probably was not unique in this respect.

The strike was opposed by both private citizens in Winnipeg and by the three levels of government. From the perspective of the strikers, all opposition was far more monolithic and co-ordinated — even conspiratorial — than was actually the case.

THE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE OF ONE THOUSAND

Probably no element of the Winnipeg General Strike has received harsher criticism and been more misunderstood than the role of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand. Those anxious to demolish the conspiratorial theories of the opponents of the strike often seem to have no hesitation in creating counter-conspiracy theories to explain the behaviour of those opponents. Some have even been prepared to doubt the sincerity — as well as the legitimacy — of the fears of the opposition. In truth, by its secretive (perhaps even furtive) behaviour, the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand has brought upon itself much of the opprobrium it has received. In contrast to the 1918 Citizens' Committee of One Hundred, which proudly listed its membership in the pages of the local newspapers, the 1919 Citizens' Committee of One Thousand never made public its membership list, the names of those on its executive committee, or kept any record of its deliberations. Such secrecy has a tendency to encourage conspiracy theories. Moreover, in the subsequent obituaries of those citizens purported or reputed to have been members of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand, not a single one mentioned either this membership or the Winnipeg General Strike. Such a record has seemed to validate those who suggested that the Citizens' Committee had nothing to be proud of and much to be ashamed of in its strike performance.

The Citizens' Committee of One Thousand was organized at a meeting on 15 May 1919. It was spearheaded by leaders of the Winnipeg Board of Trade, the Winnipeg branch of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, and the Manitoba Bar Association. Whether it was supported by as broad a spectrum of community leaders as had been the case for its predecessor in 1918 is not clear. The war was over, and the argument of wartime exigency as a reason for not paralyzing the city no longer worked. What is plain is that many of those involved were younger members of the Winnipeg middle class, both male and female. We can safely ignore the claims of the Citizens' Committee to public neutrality and non-partisanship. It represented a middle-class opposition to a working-class threat. In its organizing meeting the committee declared that its principal aim was to oppose "sympathetic strikes by employees in Public Utilities, Departments of Public

Service, and those which affect the distribution of milk and food". It also objected to public unions having "outside" affiliations, and while recognizing the right of unions to bargain with their employers, insisted that unions in positions of public trust should in case of disagreement "appeal to a duly constituted Board of Authority" rather than to the mechanism of the strike. Many of its members doubtless believed that the strike was not merely "an industrial strike but an attempt at Soviet Government — a challenge to constituted authority," particularly after the Strike Committee began to authorize certain forms of activity and service in its own name.

auxiliary steam plant necessary to generate these facilities in eight-hour shifts. Moreover, the volunteer firemen could be exhausted by false alarms rung by strikers or pranksters, and so a patrol organization was formed to guard more than 350 fire alarm boxes, as well as to walk the city streets at night. The Citizens' Committee also provided volunteers (mainly female) to pump gasoline and eventually to keep the telephone lines open with the outside world. It began publishing and distributing a free newspaper, the *Winnipeg Citizen*, in response to the strike committee's information monopoly after the closure of the daily newspapers.

In subsequent testimony in the courts, those few lead-

Manitoba Archives

Bloody Saturday, 21 June 1919. Mounties are seen returning from their third charge on Main Street. A man lies dead against the curb at left while bystanders run to his aid. Some of the Mounties are looking back to see who has been hit.

The Winnipeg General Strike had few North American precedents, and both strike committee and citizens' committee spent its first few days improvising their positions and strategies. The Citizens' Committee appears to have devoted itself in the early going to attempting to keep essential services open, as had been the case in 1918. In this sense it was merely acting out in a more politicized context the sorts of volunteer activities that had been — and still are — characteristic of the Winnipeg middle classes. The same spirit that brought out the great volunteer efforts of the 1950 flood provided personnel to keep the city running in 1919. The Committee began by providing volunteers to operate the fire department as had been done in 1918. But simply providing volunteers to run the fire department was not enough. The reduced water pressure being produced under orders of the Strike Committee was inadequate to reach above the second floor of buildings or to fight almost any serious fire. The Citizens' Committee therefore took over the pressure pumps, as well as the

ers of the Citizens' Committee willing to acknowledge their participation in the strike insisted that the organization had not taken sides in the labour dispute, but had merely sought to keep the city running. According to Edward Parnell, "The Citizens' Committee was gotten up for no other purpose but keeping law and order in the city and endeavouring to help run the public utilities and keep the city's affairs moving." Such a purpose was hardly neutral, but it was certainly understandable as a legitimate expression of the class interests of those involved. A large number of subsequent oral interviews with labour leaders of the time testify to labour's contemporary appreciation of the legitimate class nature of this opposition.

Because of the secrecy with which the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand surrounded itself, however, we simply do not know whether it was responsible for many of the other activities with which it has been charged or credited. F.G. Thompson, the man who organized the loyal veterans in early June of 1919,

vehemently denied that he was in any way associated with the Citizens' Committee. In many cases, individuals and initiatives labelled as representing the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand may have been the result of action never authorized by that organization. When Messrs. Sweatman and Andrews participated in Mayor Gray's special Round Table Conference on 23 May, for example, they did not claim to be acting for the Citizens' Committee, although their preemptory attitude may have suggested more empowerment than was actually the case.

There is no reason to assume that A.J. Andrews in his role as special counsel for the Dominion government was acting as an official representative of the Committee of One Thousand, and it is as unfair to associate Andrews the government counsel with the Citizens' Committee as it is to associate various strike leaders with the Calgary Convention and the One Big Union. At the same time, more openness at the time and later by the Citizens' Committee would have been necessary to provide a different picture. If the stories told are true of the refusal of various members of the Committee of One Thousand to make public information about the organization to D.C. Masters in his research on the strike — at a time when many might have been interviewed to give a more accurate "inside story" — they merely confirm the extent to which the opposition to the strike failed to appreciate the importance of the verdict of history.

THE STATE AND THE STRIKE

One major element of opposition to the strike came from "the state". Recent Canadian historiography has shown considerable interest in the role of the state (as opposed to the politicians) in various aspects of Canadian development. In Canada "the state" included three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. State opposition might have been much more efficient had each level of government first been able to decide upon a concerted policy of opposition and then co-ordinate that policy with other levels. Instead, the several levels of government only gradually worked themselves into a posture of total opposition, and never did become completely co-ordinated. Particularly at the local level, there was some residual sympathy for labour among some of the politicians. The "state" was neither a monolith nor unalterably the enemy.

A lack of direction, particularly in the early days of the strike, was understandable, given the unprecedented nature of the occasion. At the same time, the federal government was profoundly concerned about postwar labour and economic problems, and could have responded — as did the British government in February of 1919 — by establishing a Cabinet-level committee (and inter-departmental staff) on industrial unrest. Instead, the Canadian government relied almost totally on *ad hoc* measures associated with its wartime suppression of dissent. Why the Canadian government chose to use the extension of its wartime emergency powers dealing with dissent rather than those to keep essential services running is a question that still needs to be studied. But it is probably connected both with the federal nature of the country and the narrow vindictiveness of those who implemented the policy.

To a considerable extent, the Union government still in power in Ottawa at the time of the strike had not yet adjusted to the coming of peace. It quite accurately saw organized labour as one of its principal critics and opponents. Labour had taken the lead outside Quebec in opposing national registration and the subsequent introduction of conscription. Labour spokesmen were virtually the only Canadians prepared to complain about the arbitrary abuse of civil rights which the government had perpetuated since virtually the beginning of the war. The chorus of labour disapproval of government repression was greatly increased with the coming of the Armistice, since critics could now point out that the emergency was over. Much time at the notorious Walker Theatre meeting in December 1918 and the Calgary Convention of March 1919 — key events in the government's case against the arrested strike leaders — was spent in passing resolutions critical of the Union government's continued policy of orders-in-council, incarceration of political prisoners, and intervention in Russia. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the federal government's ruthless suppression of the Winnipeg

Manitoba Archives

Volunteer constables armed with clubs clear Portage Avenue on the late afternoon of 10 June.

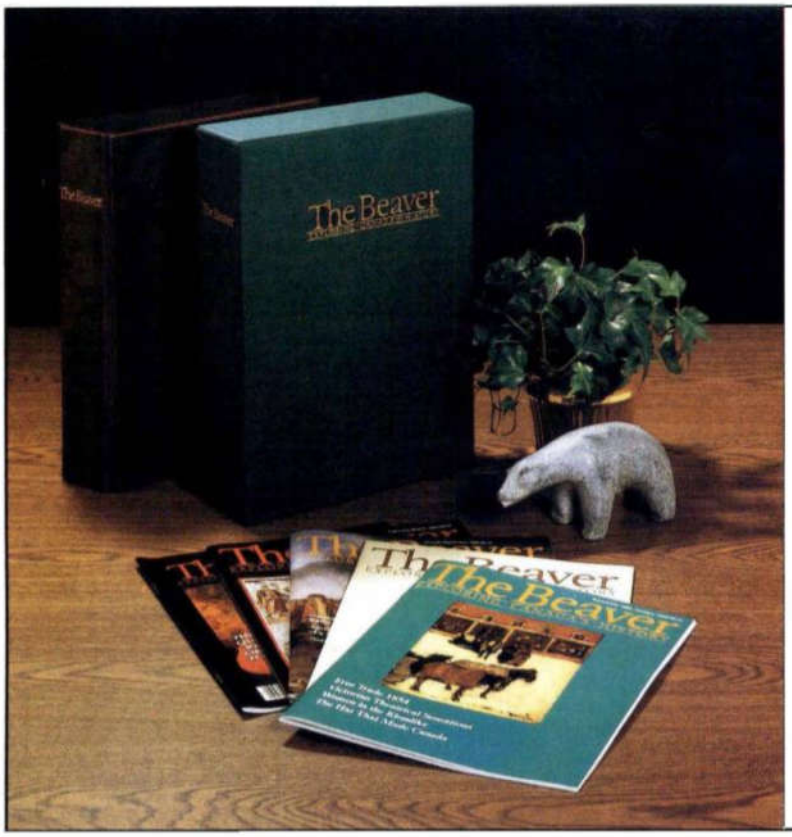
Manitoba Archives

A streetcar comes to grief in front of City Hall on "Bloody Saturday".

General Strike owed much to this continued opposition from labour.

The federal government's only immediate direct interest in the Winnipeg General Strike, apart from the need to supply the instruments of law and order when requested by the local authorities, was in keeping running the post office and the railroads. The extent of the government's involvement in a buildup of military and paramilitary force in Winnipeg in 1919 was by itself substantial, but that force was openly employed only on "Bloody Saturday" after the strike had been effectively broken by other means. The strike in Winnipeg was not a national one, and the Dominion could well have kept itself at arm's length. Most of the public services affected were owned or regulated by the city, with a few (particularly the telephone system) run by the province. The three levels of government eventually came to what appeared to be a common strategy for dealing with their employees, which consisted of insisting that on pain of dismissal the unions involved agree to forswear future general sympathetic strikes and in most cases break with the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council. When the unions refused to comply, their members were dismissed or replaced. But this common strategy was hardly a carefully co-ordinated one. The federal government opposed the dismissal of the Winnipeg police force and refused to step in to police Winnipeg after the members of the policemen's union were dismissed by the city, for example, thus forcing the city to turn to the "specials" for its policing.

No amount of special pleading could possibly avoid the conclusion that the state's response (especially on the federal level) to the Winnipeg General Strike was, on the whole, clumsy and malicious. The only truly dexterous series of moves were made by federal Labour Minister Gideon Robertson, who succeeded in getting the ironmasters to agree to a definition of collective bargaining which could be accepted by the running trades unions of the railroads, thus preventing the running trades from endorsing the strikers and possibly producing a national walkout. But such action was unusual. Instead, the federal government chose to break the strike by arbitrarily arresting some of its leaders and subsequently prosecuting them in the criminal courts for seditious conspiracy and seditious libel. The defence in the conspiracy trials made much of the fact that not all of the strike's leaders had been arrested or charged, and that many of those arrested were not really leaders of the strike at all.



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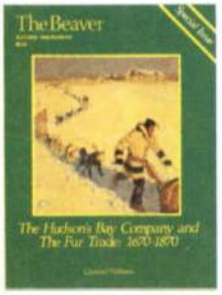

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By GLYNDWR WILLIAMS

86 pages. Illustrated

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See tax table page 48

Western Labor News

SPECIAL STRIKE EDITION No. 32

STRIKE UNBROKEN

KAISERISM WILL NOT WORK

BLOODY SATURDAY

RNWMP MAKE GORY DEBUT—PEACEFUL CITIZENS SHOT WITHOUT WARNING—CITY UNDER MILITARY CONTROL—RETURNED MEN INCENSED—STRIKERS MORE DETERMINED

Kaiserism in Canada

"COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NOT CONCEDED"

IS THERE A WAY OUT

MASS MEETINGS FOR MONDAY, JUNE 23

"Western Labor News" for 23 June 1919. Right: Mounties charge strikers at William Avenue and Main Street, 21 June.

It was undoubtedly the case that the federal government, in the person of local attorney A.J. Andrews, confused the questions of "revolutionary activity" and strike leadership, acting as though the two were interchangeable. Indeed, the federal government always operated on the assumption that what was happening in Winnipeg was not simply a labour action, but a potential revolution. Andrews chose initially to arrest those men with the greatest records of extreme statements and general opposition to the government. As early as 1917, the commanding officer of Military District 10 (which included Winnipeg) had singled out a number of Winnipeg anti-conscriptionists, whom he argued needed to be dealt with under the War Measures Act. Nothing was done in 1917 to F.J. Dixon, John Queen, A.A. Heaps, and George Armstrong, but the security forces built up files and they would be among the "strike leaders" singled out by Andrews for arrest and prosecution in 1919. The government would have been more consistent had it arrested the fifteen members of the central strike committee, but of these only Bob Russell was chosen. In any case, these arrests greatly aggravated *Free Press* editor J.W. Dafoe, generally no friend of the general strike. In an editorial on 18 June, Dafoe argued that the arrests "may do the extremists an actual service. They were in the position of leaders of a senseless criminal strike which was nearing the point of collapse. ... Their arrest will enable them to pose as martyrs in the cause of the working-man and will also supply them with a plausible excuse for failure."

However the choice of "strike leaders" was made, the arrests effectively broke the strike. The federal government might have justified them in those terms, and then dropped the charges. It chose instead to prosecute those

arrested for criminal conspiracy, thus legitimizing the arrests in terms of the larger apprehended political danger. This prosecution at least had the merit of being within the accepted rules of "British justice," unlike the government's first instinct, which was to bring the charges before an Immigration Tribunal which could hear them without any of the safeguards of the common law. With the exception of George Armstrong, who was a native-born Canadian, all the remaining arrested individuals had been born in Great Britain. They had been scandalously deprived of their immunity from deportation as undesirables (but not their citizenship) by legislation hastily passed in Ottawa on 6 June 1919. The federal government's behaviour in the arrests and subsequent trials need not be defended, but its malicious quality has tended to prevent other issues, particularly the question of the intent of the strikers, from being examined on their merits.

There are a good many more aspects of the strike that cry out for further examination, including the role of the courts, the role of the police, the activities of the press, and the effect of the strike outside Winnipeg itself. But perhaps this brief introduction will serve to illustrate that historical interpretation need never be set in stone, that there are always new questions to be asked and new answers to be offered. ◆

J.M. Bumsted is Professor of History, St. John's College, University of Manitoba. His two-volume history of Canada was published by Oxford University Press in 1993. His history of the Winnipeg General Strike was published this spring by Watson & Dwyer.

THE PACKET

Letters, Notes and Opinion

George Back's Sketchbooks Come to Canada

Crossing the Barren Lands, July 1821. From Sketchbook II.

Two bound sketchbooks by Midshipman (later Admiral) George Back (1796-1878) were recently acquired from Back's English descendants and brought back to Canada by the National Archives. They contain approximately 152 watercolours, drawings and maps depicting the inhabitants, landscape, flora and fauna encountered by Sir John Franklin and the members of his 1819-1822 arctic overland expedition.

Despite their small size, the sketchbooks are a rich visual witness of this ill-fated expedition in which 11 of the 20 men starved to death in the summer and early fall of 1821. There are extraordinary views of places such as Carlton House, Saskatchewan; Fort Chipewyan (the only illustration of this first Alberta settlement); Holey (now Oxford) Lake, Manitoba; and Portage la Loche, Cape Barrow, and Wilberforce Falls, NWT. There are several portraits of the Yellowknife Indians, now extinct as a tribal group, who guided the expedition, and studies of their clothing, weapons and other artifacts. Finally, Back depicts natural subjects such as beaver, buffalo, reindeer, berry plants and the *tripe-de-roche* moss that the explorers scraped off the rocks, boiled and drank to keep themselves alive.

The expedition mapped 600 miles of Arctic coastline, putting a roof on the map of Canada. Sketchbook I contains maps outlining the 1819 journey from York Factory, Manitoba, where the expedition landed, to Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, and from Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, to Point Lake, NWT, in 1820. Sketchbook II contains similar maps of the Coppermine River to Point Turnagain and back to Marten Lake, all in the NWT, dating from 1821 to 1822.

The acquisition of the sketchbooks was made possible with the assistance of Hoechst and Celanese Canada, Montreal, and of the Department of Canadian Heritage under the Movable Cultural Property Program.

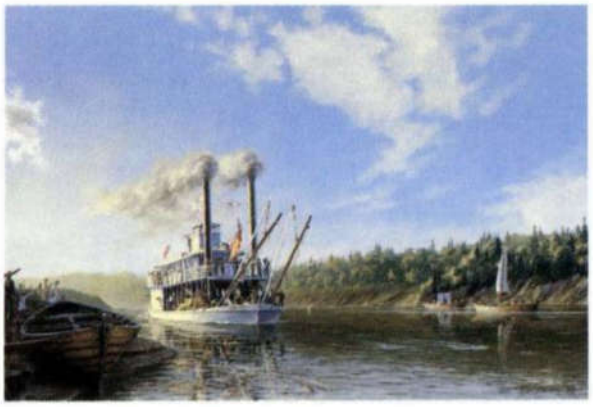
Fort Chipewyan, 27 May 1820. From Sketchbook I.

FROM BACK'S SKETCHBOOKS

Landing near Point Everitt, NWT, July 1821. From Sketchbook II.

Sketch of a polar bear, from Sketchbook II, June or July 1821.

Untitled (likely Athabasca River), June 1822. From Sketchbook II.



Steamer *Northcote* at Fort Edmonton, 1875

BY PETER RINDLISBACHER

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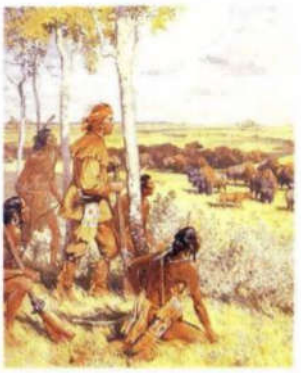

C. *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.

D. *Trading Ceremony at York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.

E. *R.M. Ballantyne and Chief Trader George Barnston at Tadoussac, 1846*
By Charles Comfort.

F. *Battle in the Bay, 1697*
By Norman Wilkinson.

Over the years the Hudson's Bay Company has commissioned distinguished Canadian painters to create works depicting important events in the long history of the Company. Among the most popular works in the HBC collection are those pictured above by C.W. Jefferys, A. Sherriff Scott, Norman Wilkinson and Charles Comfort.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

A Life of Public Service

By J.E. Rea

TRUE PATRIOT
The Life of Brooke Claxton
1898-1960

By David Jay Bercuson. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1993. 360 pp., illus. $35.00.

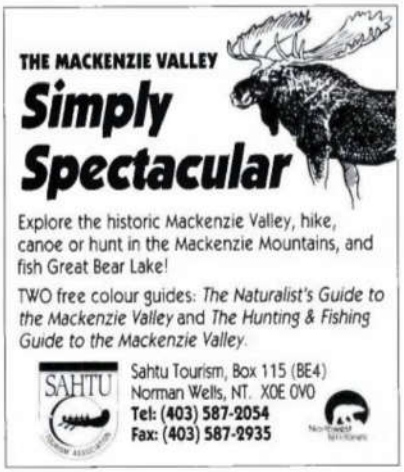
Brooke Claxton was a member of the most talented cabinet ever to serve Canada — the Liberals in their glory years from 1935-1957. Biographies of "Mike" Pearson, Louis St. Laurent, C.D. Howe and Jimmy Gardiner have already appeared; Chubby Power has written the best political memoir we have, Paul Martin has left us two volumes and Jack Pickersgill a splendid memoir of St. Laurent; and there will surely be books on Tom Crerar, Angus L. Macdonald, J.L. Ralston and perhaps others of that compelling group. They deserve to be remembered as the government who brought the country through the Second World War, laid the basis for the social net we now enjoy (even if we are having trouble paying for it) and presided over the longest sustained period of economic expansion in our history. Brooke Claxton was a somewhat untypical colleague in that cabinet.

Professor Bercuson, of the University of Calgary where he is currently the Graduate Dean, confesses readily to the biographer's early realization that the attempt to replicate a life is a daunting responsibility. Wisely, he has attempted to tell the story of Brooke Claxton, "warts and all", directly and clearly; and he has done so with insight, sensitivity and a continuing concern for the national fabric within which Claxton lived and worked. That Claxton's career was full of ironies, inconsistencies and outright contradictions has made his task all the more difficult.

Claxton was not drawn to a political career early or easily. As an introspective thirteen-year-old, he suffered through his parents' bitter and scandalous divorce. He enlisted in the army at age seventeen and was set to guard Montreal's Victoria Bridge. The boredom brought on depression that would recur to plague him all his life, particularly at times of inactivity. He went to France as a NCO in a siege battery in April 1918. War, for Claxton, was a "base, dreadful and dirty business, without glory". Bercuson notes that "he came to believe strongly in the avoidance of war at almost any cost", a nice irony for a man who was Minister of National Defence through the Korean War and the early Cold War, presiding over a massive increase in Canadian military spending.

McGill law school followed the war and Claxton entered his father's firm, married (happily and securely) but never found the practice of corporate law enough for his restless spirit. As a nationalist, he supported a national broadcasting system, as a reformer he sought to enhance national life but ignored disease and poverty and the right of workers to organize. His toryism was a function of Montreal's class and ethnic milieu and his liberal capitalism an article of faith. He was connected to the *Winnipeg Free Press* through John W. Dafoe and the group who surrounded him, although Bercuson gets the famous "Sanhedrin" quite wrong. Claxton supported the League of Nations, embraced collective security and even dabbled with neutralism. But the coming of the war in 1939 and his need to make a living in Montreal forced him to distance himself from this last enthusiasm. And despite his background, he came to believe that French-English hostility would only end when they shared one loyalty — to Canada.

Claxton's pan-Canadianism drew him into the 1940 election. His rise in the party was swift and his conversion to diligent party man as much due to ambition as anything else. Like many of the senior civil servants that he knew well, he believed in an activist government and in his first major appointment presided effectively over the introduction of family allowances. After the war he became Minister of National Defence instead of External Affairs for which he had lobbied shamelessly for some time. But despite his disappointment, he soon found that Defence, as a result of the Cold War and later the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Korean War, was anything but a political backwater.

His new position also forced him to confront and on occasion to contradict his earlier convictions. Despite his commitment to collective security, he rejected the opportunity to participate in the Berlin airlift. He was extremely reluctant to have Canadian ground forces sent to Korea. While he believed in NATO, he was not happy with Canadian military obligations in Europe. At bottom, he found the creation of a large, costly, peacetime military establishment at variance with Canada's traditional posture. After leaving the cabinet to accept a lucrative offer in the insurance industry, Claxton's final important public contribution was to get the newly created Canada Council off to a successful beginning.

Bercuson has written a fine book; not simply about this complex man but also about the rapidly changing nation that he served. But I suppose that almost every reviewer will challenge him on one of his concluding observations — that Claxton shared his Liberal colleagues' conviction that the fate of the country was bound up with the competence and success of their party. "It was a peculiarly arrogant way of thinking, but looking at the record of Canada's federal governments since 1957 does far more to uphold that belief than to undermine it". C.D. Howe could not have put it better. ◆

J.E. Rea is Professor of History at the University of Manitoba.

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Waiting for the Whiz-bangs

By Gavin Murphy

WHEN YOUR NUMBER'S UP
The Canadian Soldier in the First World War

By Desmond Morton. Random House of Canada, Toronto, 1993. 354 pp., illus. $32.50.

Nearly 60,000 soldiers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) died in the First World War out of a total of 619,636 who enlisted. Why they joined and what they experienced are the subject of historian Desmond Morton's book.

When Your Number's Up quotes extensively from the memoirs, diaries and letters of troops sent overseas. This provides an insight into the war that no "official" history alone could ever achieve. The writers are often the men who suffered the most; not only at the hands of the enemy, but also from the wretched conditions and, worse still, many of the officers above them. Wryly noted Private Donald Fraser of the 31st Battalion after his captain buried his face in his hands while under fire for the first time: "Our estimation of our officers sank to zero and it was a lesson to us that in future it is best to rely on your own wits and do not expect too much from those senior to you."

Going "over the top" of the trenches and marching shoulder to shoulder to deliver the elusive knockout blow to the Germans epitomizes the futility of trench warfare. Soldiers burdened with more than 60 lbs. of kit and equipment were no match for enemy machine guns. On the first day of the Somme offensive in 1916, the British suffered a staggering 60,000 casualties, including the virtual annihilation of the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel. Waiting was often worse than attacking. "Everyone is a bundle of nerves, and excited, until the 'show' commences," explained Andrew Munro in a June 1917 letter. "Then all at once everyone seems to get quite calm and over we go, without a qualm, some whistling, some singing etc.".

When Your Number's Up features chapters on the frequently overlooked contribution of the medical service, the problems facing repatriated veterans and the plight of Canadian prisoners of war. A total of 3,842 Canadians were being held prisoner when the armistice was signed in November, 1918. Another 100 men had escaped, including Private Arthur Corker of the 7th Battalion, who finally succeeded after seven attempts. These details help to put the totality of the CEF's contribution and the war's overall impact into focus. The book contains excellent photographs and diagrams, although many have been published before, including in Morton's own acclaimed 1989 co-authored book *Marching to Armageddon.* Unpublished pictures from sources such as the National Archives and private family albums, possibly showing troops quoted in the book, would have enhanced *When Your Number's Up.* One aerial diagram of trench networks is poorly labeled and almost indecipherable.

When Your Number's Up is an important contribution to Canadian military history. It offers a unique perspective of the war from the men who served at the front. Morton's book also reminds us that the price paid for Canada's coming of age as a nation was the death of 59,544 men whose number came up during the war. ◆

Gavin Murphy is an Ottawa lawyer with a special interest in marine history.

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A Light on New France

Conferences are a ritual of spring for university professors and their graduate students. Once the exams are marked and the undergraduates are gone, scholars flock to the airports en route to academic meetings. They meet their colleagues, share research, exchange gossip, and (for younger scholars) offer themselves on an informal but crucial job market. Since today's academic community is vast, almost no topic is too small or specialized for a scholarly conference. Scores of them are held every year.

Still, it was intriguing to learn of a scholarly conference that is being dedicated to a single history book, particularly one published twenty years ago. The announcement of "Twenty Years after *Habitants et Marchands de Montreal*" seemed good reason to look at a book (and an historian) relatively little known, especially in English Canada, and at the changing ideas historians have about that very early Canadian community known as New France.

After twenty years, most history books are both out-of-print and out of fashion. What inspired the admirers of this one about the merchants and farmers of seventeenth-century Montreal to mark its anniversary in this way?

"It marked a turning point in New France history," declares historian Sylvie Dépatie, one of the organizers. One of the invited speakers, geographer Cole Harris of the University of British Columbia, says "it has enlarged enormously our understanding of New France. There is no book like it." They also intended the conference to recognize the book's author, an historian whom Harris describes as "one of the country's great scholars."

Louise Dechêne, the author of the book being honoured, says she did not grow up expecting to write histories of New France. Her early historical studies were in other areas, and she began her working career as an archivist. She spent the mid-1960s working in France for the Archives of Quebec, and she studied French history more than Canadian topics. "I came back to Canada in 1968, but I came back as an archivist, expecting to work as an archivist. It was only an offer to teach at the University of Ottawa that made me a history professor. In 1969 I began work on the doctorate that became *Habitants et Marchands*."

National Archives of Canada

Bourgeois of New France, by Henri Beau.

Dechêne came to the history of New France with unusual qualifications. Not only did she know the archival sources, but in France she had been immersed in the work of the renowned French scholars of the *Annalog* school, who had been exploring early modern France virtually from the ground up. Turning away from great historical events and names, they had cultivated methods and sources for studying how lives were lived and societies organized on a local or regional level, almost farm by farm and village by village.

Dechêne declares she had no big theory to advance or test when she began to apply these methods to the early settlers of Montreal. She simply wanted to see how a French society transplanted itself into the New World. But she came to the history of New France at a moment when it was ripe for transformation.

Two schools had long dominated the history of New France. Quebec's clerical historians had loved to find in New France the roots of a society called by God to a special destiny: rural, devout, free from all the evils of the modern secular world. English-Canadian historians, for their part, often described a society that was colourful, but also backward, benighted and primitive, needing nothing so much as the blessings of conquest by the British.

The assault on these views had already started. In French, Marcel Trudel fought for a history that was scientific and dispassionate instead of sermonizing. In English, Toronto historian William Eccles fought a long campaign against the patronizing anglophone view, arguing that New France was not such a bad place to live and had been quite successful on its own terms. But most histories of New France still worked from the top down, focussing on colonial leaders and their view of the colony.

Habitants et Marchands turned that upside down. Instead of Frontenac and Jeanne Mance, Louise Dechêne explored the world of struggling fur-trade merchants like Alexis Monière and pioneer farmers like Maurice Adverty, who got a reproachful letter from his father asking when he would return

to France (never, Dechêne tells us in a footnote). It was mostly done by scrutiny of the routine records kept by local notaries: land leases, wills, livestock sales, marriage contracts, and household inventories. Scholars who have worked in those sources know what labour it demanded to construct a coherent history from them, yet Dechêne completed the book in about four years, even as she was raising a family on her own. "I did work hard," is about all she says now.

From those records, Dechêne built up a massively detailed, carefully worked-out account of a farming society less different from its French counterparts than most historians had imagined. The habitant farmers were not inclined to jump into canoes and go off to the wild, free life of the *voyageurs*. Seigneurs were not benevolent, paternal leaders, she showed, and mostly they ignored their estates, except to collect rents that creamed off what small surplus the poor farmers could accumulate. But most of the book is just a meticulous description of how an early Canadian society functioned. "You can't find one big, snappy interpretation there," says Allan Greer, a scholar of French Canada at the University of Toronto, "but it's clear she was determined to respect and take seriously that society. It is easy to be glib about the distant past. She may be less accessible than some, but it is because she is never glib."

Published in 1974, *Habitants et Marchands* was hailed by Dechêne's mentors in France. It sold well in Quebec, despite being almost 600 demanding pages of tightly-written prose. It was eventually honoured by the Canadian Historical Association as the book of the decade. But perhaps its greatest impact was on students and young scholars. Both as a method for doing research into New France and as a model of thoughtful scholarship, it has had a commanding influence for twenty years. Graduate students whom she has trained describe *Habitants et Marchands* as the first book to convince them there were big serious questions about New France on which they could build careers. Thomas Wien jokes of his experience of it as "a conversion." Then he was an undergraduate dabbling in German history; now, after studies with Dechêne, he's a specialist in the history of New France and a professor at the Université de Montréal.

The conference honouring the book, in fact, was largely organized by grateful ex-students, who saw in it the right way to honour a professor who cherishes her privacy and is not comfortable with extravagant praise. They stress that Louise

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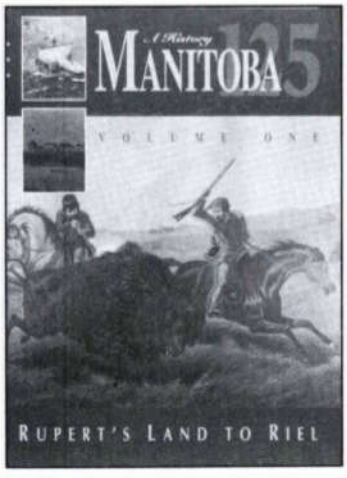

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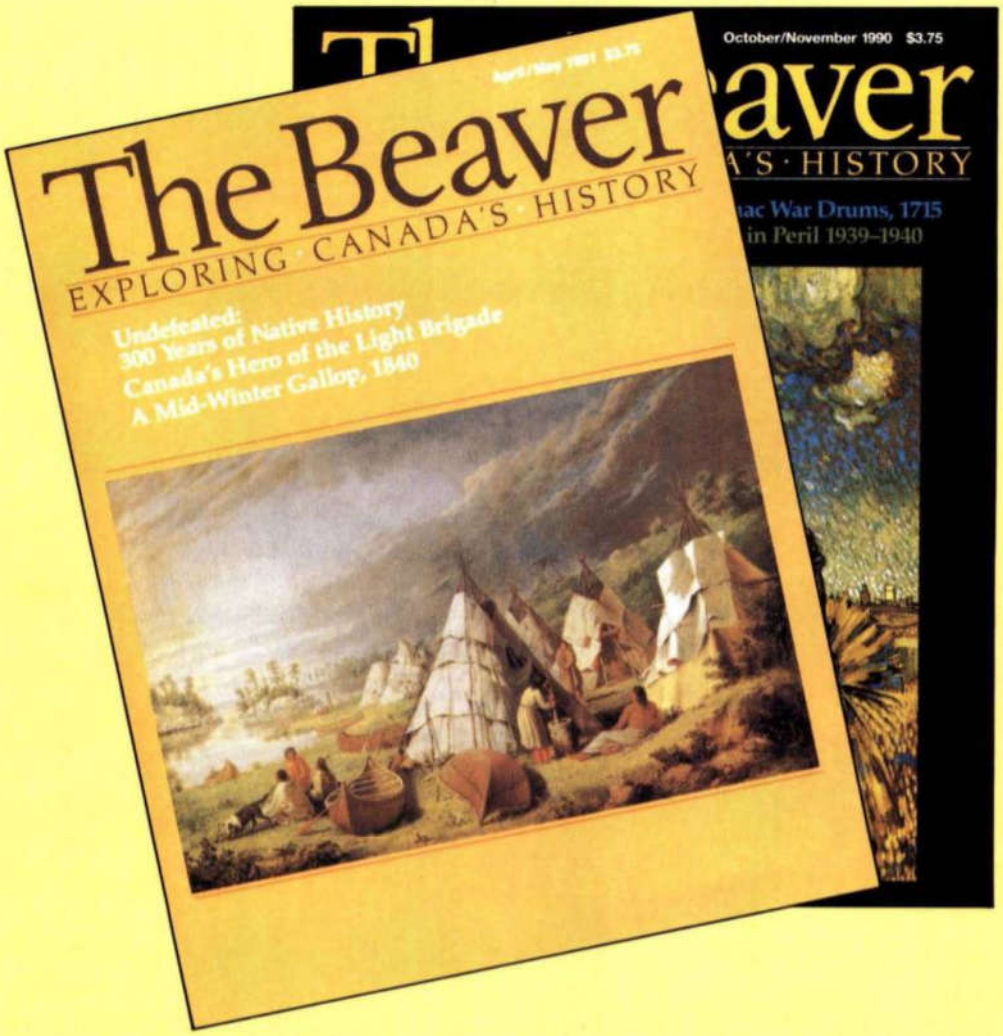

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Dechêne has been a dedicated and devoted teacher. "She devotes an enormous amount of time to her graduate students," says one. "Once she has taken you as a student, it is an absolute commitment."

It is not all nicely-nicely, however. "Rigorous" is the word often applied both to her scholarship and to her teaching standards. "She never told you just what she wanted," says one student, "so you worked your ass off trying to do what you thought she expected." Another describes her criticism as unsparing, but always valuable. At least some of the motivation for the fine work done on rural New France in the last two decades, it seems, came from the penetrating, questioning gaze that sometimes comes across the top of Louise Dechêne's glasses.

Dechêne returns the praise, stressing she had no intention of forming a "school" in her own image. "The beauty of these students is, they have their own minds. With the better students, it is a conversation. They bring me as much as I give."

Dechêne still stresses she was never out to prove "this or that theory." The only part of her book she regrets, in fact, is its brief conclusion, which she wrote in haste ("it seemed a book needed a conclusion") and which she thinks went beyond her usual cautious, close-to-the-documents style. "With some people, the conclusion seems to be all they read."

She is equally cautious about the meaning of New France for modern times. "Its influence today? I don't know. I don't think nations are like people who grow from little to big. Societies are constructed by *history*, and there has been a lot of history from the seventeenth century to now. I am disconnected from those who believe in an identity from history that is an unchanging reality."

She thinks, however, that it is notable that the history of New France, somewhat in contrast to that of later periods of Quebec history, has always been done by English-Canadians as well as French-Canadians. She herself has taught at McGill University since 1972, and it is striking how her students have included both francophones, whom she has attracted to the English university, and anglophones, whom she has helped integrate into the French-speaking academic community.

Habitants et Marchands is Dechêne's one and only big book. "I'm slow," she says. Others see it more as proof of her uncompromising style, her commitment to students, and her detachment from the frantic publishing and "industrial scholarship" of today's over-supplied academic marketplace. "I'd rather have one book from Dechêne than the shelf of Brand X," says Allan Greer.

But awareness of her contribution is spreading. She played an important part in preparing the spectacular first volume of *The Historical Atlas of Canada. Habitants et Marchands* has finally been published in an English translation. And this spring she has a new book, the first in a series on the way rural New France was administered. "It is full of new things," says her historical colleague Paul-André Linteau, who is also her publisher at Editions du Boréal in Montreal.

The scholars of New France who gathered at the *Habitants et Marchands* conference expect to participate in a wide-ranging consideration of the current state of New France's history. But they also hope to salute a book, and an historian, and a scholarly career, that seems to command near universal respect. "She's a Canadian treasure, in her way," says Cole Harris. "I can't think of anyone in scholarship I admire more." ◆

"Habitants and Merchants In Seventeenth Century Montreal", translated by Liana Vardi, was published by McGill-Queen's Press in 1992. "Le Partage des Subsistences" by Louise Dechêne was published this spring by Editions du Boréal.

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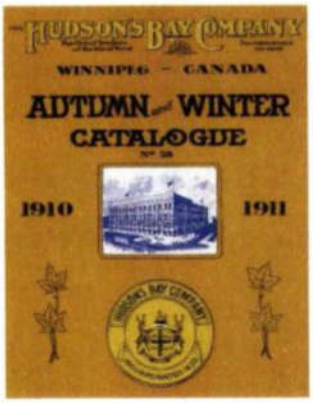

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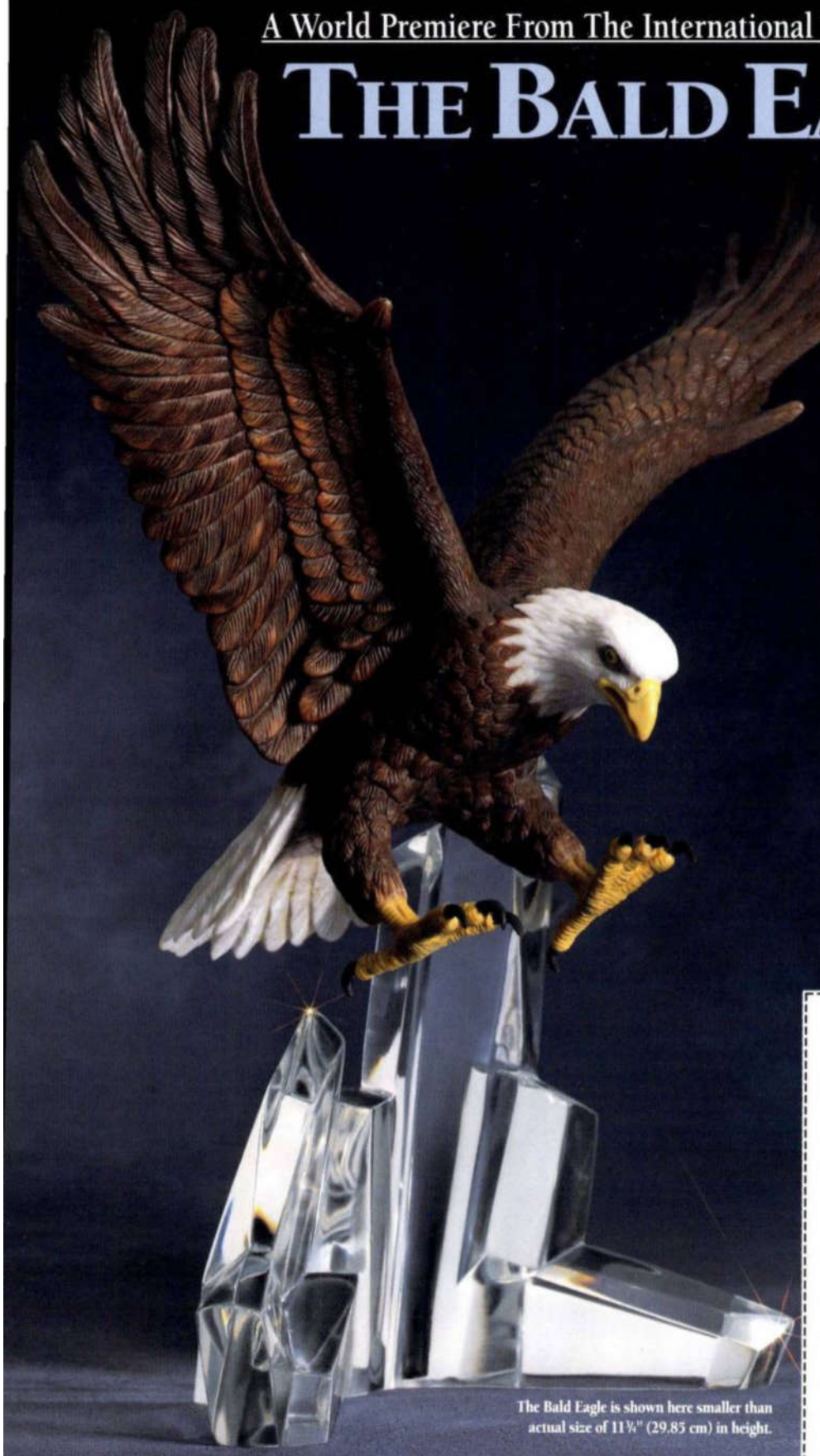

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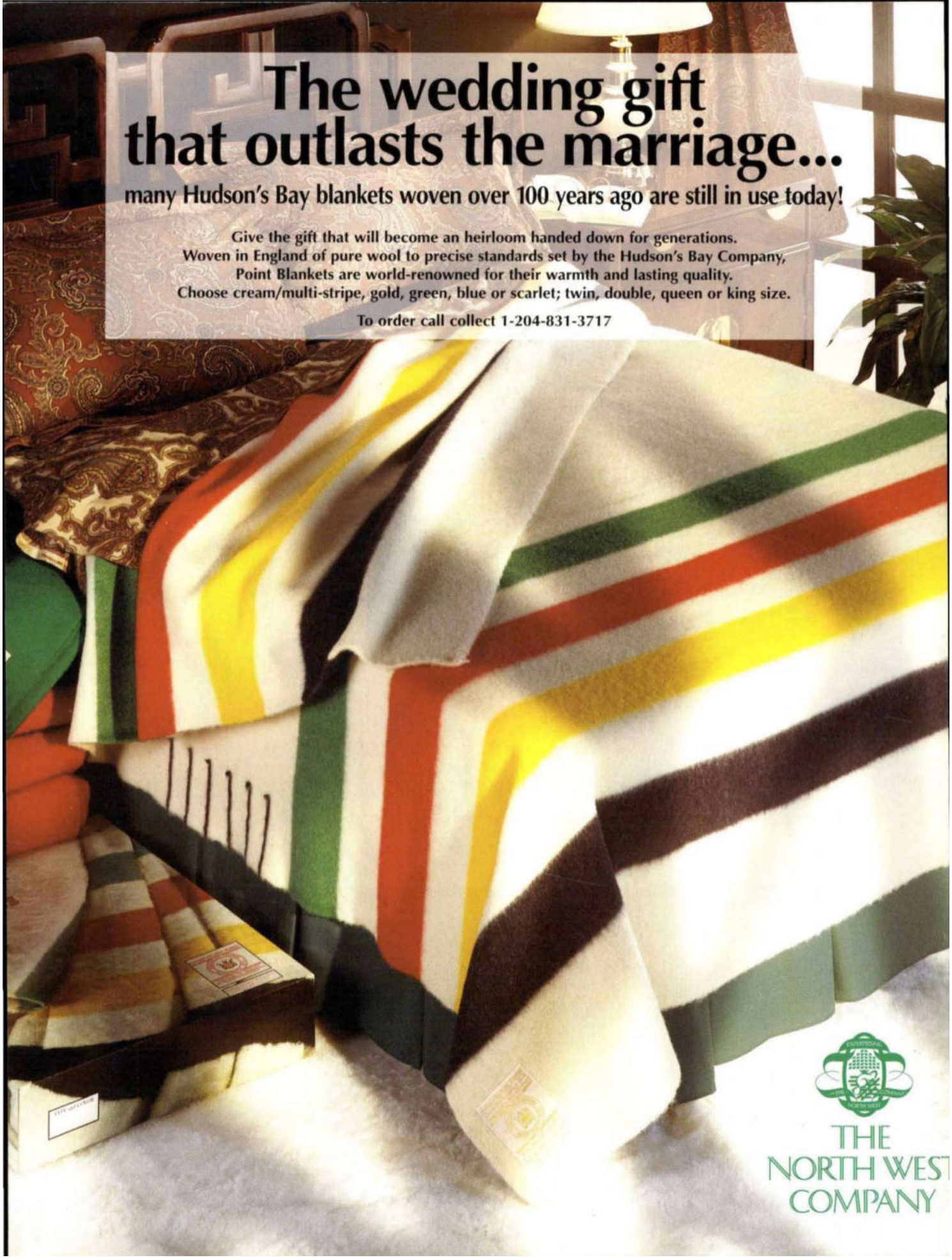
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